Dasa Mahavidya
&
Tantra Sastra

S. SATPATHY

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DASA MAHAVIDYA & TANTRA SASTRA

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SARBESWAR SATPATHY

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FOREWORD

Tantra by its great and puissant system made a landmark in the history of religion even though it had fallen to disrepute due to its Vamamarga of excessive sense-indulgence and unrestrained propensities but by audaciously employing the means of satisfying his desire and elevating and sublimating it by simple physiopsychological aptitudes with a purpose for better enjoyment of this life and bliss beyond it. The Tantras have not therefore reserved its truth for the initiated few. It knocked at the door of every human being who need not search for God head beyond himself. The Chapters hereafter will reveal this truth as the reader forges ahead with the text of the book.

Dedicated in the feet of
Lord Jagannath

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Tantra by its great and puissant system made a landmark in the history of religion even though it had fallen to disrepute due to its Vamamarga of excessive sense-indulgence and unrestrained social immorality by its followers. But symbolically these methods were the way of knowledge and the way of Ananda, by pursuit of which nature in man liberates itself by right discrimination in power and practice of its own energies, elements and potentialities. In this book I have tried to compare and contrast the philosophical aspects of the Dasamahavidya which is a Tantra Sadhana pursued as a discipline for mastery, perfection, liberation and beatitude. In fact the essence of the Mahavidya Upasana lies in the fact that instead of drawing back from manifested nature and its difficulties it has to be confronted, seized and conquered by the mechanism available at the hand of every man. Because the beauty of Tantra Sastra is that it is entirely catholic in its approach and afford religiophilosophic opportunity to every individual irrespective of its caste or sex. For this the common man has not to search for as place outside society or a means far away from his availability. He has only to raise his nature not by subduing his desire or animal propensities but by audaciously employing the means of satisfying his desire and elevating and sublimating it by simple physiopsychological aptitudes with a purpose for better enjoyment of this life and bliss beyond it. The Tantras have not therefore reserved its truth for the initiated few. It knocked at the door of every human being who need not search for God head beyond himself. The Chapters hereafter will reveal this truth as the reader forges ahead with the text of the book.

I am thankful to my dearest daughter Sambit who patiently took dictation of the entire manuscript on long hand and my thanks are due to Mr. N. C. Panda who ungrudgingly typed it out. I am grateful to Dr. Satyavadi Mishra, retired Principal for his advice. I am also obliged to the Printers for their timely bringing this book to light. I wish all of them blessed by the Cidrupini Mahavidya Maha Nilasaraswati.

Puri
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Sarbeswar Satpathy

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CHAPTER I

THE BACK-DROP OF TANTRA WORSHIP

'Mahāvidyā' as a form of worship was not prevalent among the ancient Indians at the pre-Vedic and Vedic stage although there were sporadic references in Purānas and Smṛti about it. Before deeply delving into different aspects of Mahāvidyā worship it may be mentioned that Mahāvidyā was a form of worship in vogue among the Hindus, mostly the Tāntrics. It is significant to mention that the word 'vidyā' has assumed different meanings during the ages : primarily it means a method by which supreme knowledge is attained. According to Hindu lexicon, 'vidyā' consists of knowledge right from Brahma to Brahmānda i.e. from the subtle atom to the vast expanse of the world. In the same sense it is divided as Parā and Aparā i.e. one which imparts Brahma knowledge and the other regarding all common knowledges of sentient beings acquired by sensory organs. 'Vidyā' has been grouped as 18 in number consisting of four Vedas (Rik, Jajur, Sāma, Atharva), six Vedāngas (Sikhyā, Kalpa, Vyākarana, Nirukta, Chhanda, Jyotish), Mimāmsā, Nyāya, Smṛti, Purānas, Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, Gandharvaveda, and Arthaveda. Gradually this knowledge of 'vidyā' which is nothing but comprising of sounds and letters was idolized in the sense forms of dieties were conceived for imparting knowledge, 'विद्या मन्त्रात्मिका देवी'. As a result Saraswati was conceived as a goddess of learning (vidyādātri) whose function in the Vedas was of kindling the light of knowledge, and propelling intelligence and holding Yañja to award all benefits that would make the Yajamān prudent and wise.[1] She was also thought of as a purifying deity extremely sharp and swiftly moving (R.I. 3-10 and 11). At the advent of Purānic period the word 'vidyā' was conceived as Goddess Durgā, Manasā, Kāli subsequently called 'Mahāvidyā', the supreme knowledge in the form. 'Devi' is called Vidyā because she liberates but by her Māyā or Avidyā, she also binds. Tantra explains that she is neither Vidyā nor Avidyā but Mahāvidyā, or Mantraswarupa which comprises both the above attributes and form single whole of Prakāsa and Vimānsa Sakti in the line of Vedānta. No doubt, such a conception is tāntric in its character and was formed as a parallel to the ten incarnations of the great God Vishnu[2]. The Indian thought of dividing transmutable knowledge as basis of the whole cycle of existence being divided into 10 main parts for which 10 Dikpāls have been thought of guarding this Universe. There is a good legend regarding revealation of these Mahāvidyās in Mahābhāgabat Purāna[3]. According to this Purāna, Mahādev refused Jagadambā permission to attend Dakshya's Yajña even though he repeatedly besought for it. The daughter of Dakshya, who is a perfect Brahman seeing that Maheswar was influenced by her husband's vanity assumed a terrible aspect with the object of shortening that vanity. At the refusal of Maheswar to attend Dakshya Yajña, Sati the daughter of Dakshya having eyes redden with anger wondered for a moment. In order to give a bit of her mind both to the proud Mahādev and to her arrogant father Prajāpati she opened her three fearful eyes and over-powered Śankar with illusion. Śankar stood still at the sight of the Devi with her opened mouth in anger and eyes shining like destructive fire. At this frightful display of the terrible teeth and opened mouth with appalling lustre and sounds thundering the three worlds, Mahādev was paralised with fright and wanted to flee away. This terrible form of Goddess Sati which was a dazzling dark mass of crushed collyrium naked as space with dishevelled hair, lolling tongue and four arms, langurous with desire, terribly furious, bathed in sweat and of frightful appearance, garlanded with skulls, bearing on her head a brilliant crown and cresent moon shining like ten million suns bewildered Mahādev, who lost his self-control and tried to escape ; but to whatever quarter the Mahādev wanted to flee he saw a frightful form standing before him. At the bewilderment of Mahādev, Sati took pity on him and explained him these 10 fearful forms of ten quarters i.e. Kāli at North, Soḍasi at Northeast, Chhinnamastā at East, Dhumābati at Southeast, Bagalā at South, Kamalā at Southwest, Bhubaneswari at West, Mātangi at Northwest, Tārā the high above and Bhairabi below[4]. These are all Mahāvidyā form of Adividyā Kāli whose significance will be discussed later on. Saptasati Chandi also mentions the different forms like Brāhmani, Vaisnavi, Maheswari, Indrāni, Kaumāri, Vārahi, Narasinghi, Cāmundi that Durgā assumed while fighting with Nisumbha. These ten forms of Durgā though not exactly correspond to the Mahāvidyā form, but it would not be quite unlikely that these forms may be treated as precursors of ten Mahāvidyā forms.

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[1] Rv. 1-3 11.

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[2] History of the Tantric Religion, p. 254.

[3] Principles of Tantra, p. 259.

According to the Buddhist Tāntric tradition the second set of gooddesses emanating from Akshobhya consists of those belonging to Tārā group, the foremost among whom is Mahāchinātārā, also known as Ugratārā in Buddhist Tāntric literature[5]. It is remarkable that even the association of Akshobhya with Tārā is maintained in the Sākta Tantras. Ekajata is also a form of Tārā who is reported to have been brought over to India by Siddha Nāgārjuna from Bhotdesh or Tibet. This assumption by Dr. N. N. Bhattacharya in his *History of the Tantric Religion* contradicts placement of Nāgārjuna in the history of Buddhist tradition because Nāgārjuna belongs to 1st or 2nd Century A.D. whereas Buddhism was introduced in Bhotdesh or Tibet in the 7th Century A.D.[6] The Buddhist Tāntric tradition also admits of the emanation of Amoghasakti, Bajradevatā as the only God and the rest being goddesses mostly belonging to Tārā group like Khajrubani Tārā, Mahāsri Tārā, Dhanadā Tārā and Sitā Tārā. But the fact remains that though the Buddhist Tāntric pantheon mentions about the Goddess Tārā nowhere it is contemplated as one of the ten Mahāvidyā forms notwithstanding subsequent thinking of equating prajñā with vidyā. But these different aspects of Tārā presupposes the existence of a group of goddesses similar in form having different powers of granting boons and bestowing worldly riches. The special feature of these goddesses are that they often ride on animals and surrounded by goddesses having at times one face and four arms and at other times

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4. Principles of Tantra, pp. 262-264.
5. History of Tantric Religion pp. 238–239.
6. Sakti & Sakta p. 131.

many handed forms. It is very often said that although the tāntric tradition of worship has been there in different forms during the Vedas and the epic-ages, the Sākta Tāntric Cult of Mahāvidyā Upāsanā has assumed its importance and gradual embellishment from the deities of Tāntric Buddhism which had already established its rich and developed form by the time the Purānas appeared in a codified form. The first instance of such Upāsanā and such forms of goddess finds mention in Saptasati Chandi which is a part of the 'Mārkaṇdeya Purāna'. According to Winternitz[7] all that we can safely conclude is that the earlier Purānas must have come into being before the 7th Century A.D., for neither later dynasties nor later famous rulers for instance, Harsa the great has been mentioned in the list of Kings. Bāna in his Harsacharita has mentioned the list of Purānas that were recited during his time and since Bāna belongs to 625 A.D. it may safely be presumed that by 7th Century A.D. the Mārkaṇdeya Purānas must have been having its shape completely. And as a sequence the Mahāvidyā must have assumed importance in the history of Indian religion by 7th Century A.D.

The all pervading influence of tantra in Indian life during the Purāna age notwithstanding its interpretation by eminent scholars that it had its primitive legacy of cruel barbarous and immoral life. There is evidence that the medieval tāntric texts abound in Sakti Cult and Worship. It is wrong to interpret these texts as burdened with brāhminical elements is far from truth as they appear to be less brāhmanic and admit a broader religious denomination. It will perhaps rather be rational to say that the Mahāvidyā Upāsanā is neither vedic nor Purānic nor tāntric but a conglomeration of all these methods both exoteric and esoteric. In the Devi Bhāgabat it is stated that the scriptures which are opposed to the Smṛti and Sruti belong to the 'Tāmasa' category. The Agama of the Vāms, Kāpālikas, Kullukar and Vaishnabs were created by Śiva for rectification of the existing Upāsanā system and for forgiving the Brāhmanas who were driven out from the Vedic path owing to the curse of Dakshya, Bhrigu or Daddichi.[8] Consequently the tāntric Pancharātra system was developed. Notwithstanding the Pancharātra Upāsanā of the Buddhists, the upper classes of the society during the Buddha period had the eternal flowing tradition of Brāhmanism which was not a culture of any individual group but was a responsibility for up-holding the tradition of a nation having different religion, belief and faith as it is to-day. The Devi Bhāgabat which is a late Purāna with a professedly Sākta character has naturally believed the infallibility of Smṛti and Sruti which was deeply engrained in the culture of Bhāratabarsa. There are stories supporting the faith in the Vedas and Smṛtis regarding curses of sage Gautam to a group of Brāhmanas who followed the system of the Kāpālikas, Buddhas and Pāsanda rites. These Brāhmanas were re-born in Kali age as Vedavahya i.e. outside the pale of Veda having no faith in the Sandhyā, Gāyatri, Agnihotri etc. This legend although speaks of a group rangling among the adherants of the different religions also admits a system of synthesisation of different ideas in the religious practices adopted by the Vaidics, Smārtas, Jains, Buddhas and Pāsupatas etc. Gautam's curse as depicted in Maheswar Tantra narrates the story of religious assimilation and the philosophical thinking of the age. The curses of Gautam runs as thus :

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[7] History of Indian Literature, Winternitz.

[8] Principles of Tantra.

> "Owing to your deeds you all Brāhamanas will be fallen from the Vedic way and be ungrateful. In the Kali age you will become fool by renouncing the Veda, Brāhman, Go and Mantra and by accepting the Brāhmavād. Wicked at heart and apparently clean in appearance you will give up works of religious merit because of your study of Hetuvidyā and the knowledge of Brahma. Brāhman is true, worship is false : when the worship is false what is the need of doing meritorious work ?"

Thus, this Maheswar Tantra has very clearly and emphatically depicted the currents and cross-currents of the thought of the Bhāratiyas of the time and since it was thought not only important to be clean in appearance but also clean at heart which is thought to be the seat of the great knowledge, Mahāvidyā. In this way the idea of Mahāvidyā worship gradually gained ground.

In a good number of Purānic texts such tāntric subjects have been incorporated. A passage from the Devi Purāna describing the qualification of a Sthāpaka who performs the installation of God is considered as an adept in tāntric rituals. Similarly, Kālikā Purāna devotes many chapters to the description of Mantras, Mudrās, Kabachas, Nyāsa etc. similar to those obtaining in Mahāvidyā Upāsanā. The fact of assimilation of different religious cult is evident from Agnipurāna wherein worship of Vishnu and other gods stated to be worshipped in the Vaidic, Tāntric or Misra method. The Bhāgabata Purāna also mentions about tāntric cults of Vishnu, Vaidic and Tāntric Dikshyā. The subsequent development of this Upāsanā can be had from the Pancharātra Samhitās, all of which were composed before 800 A.D. The term Pancharātra had a wider denotation associated with the names of the deities like Śiva, Devi, Ganesh, Brahmā and Mahākāla. It is difficult to call these deities as exclusively of tāntric character as has been accepted by a large number of critics of tāntric literature. Although the deities have their very first appearance even in the Vedas, they have changed their characteristics and added a good many number of attributes during the passage of time as the idea of relgion advanced in Bhāratabarsa. A Purāna known as Purusottam Samhitā says that any system which has laid supreme emphasis on Bhakti or devotion may be called Pancharātra which is also known as Akayamveda, Mulaveda, Satvata, Tantra and Agama. It is a Rahasyamnaya or mysterious area of knowledge taught by Vishnu to Brahmā who had learnt it in five nights, hence the name Pancharātra. Pancharātra as a Sāstra expounds five types of knowledge and came finally to be connected with Vaishnavism. The present Mahāvidyā Upāsanā at the dead of night must have obtained its system from these Pancharātra Upāsanā and the Mahāvidyā Icons and worship as depicted in Markaṇdeya Purāna and in different tāntric texts like Rudra Yamal, Vishnu Yamal, Brahma Yamal, Nilatantra etc. would have attributed some of its basic features. This will be more evident when we consider the Pancharātra texts dealing with four principal topics : Gyāna (Vidyā), Yoga Kriyā and Chārya. The externally existing supreme being, according to Śāstra has a germ of all creation nascent in him at the time of dissolution. He does nott ake any active part in the creation but projects his will (Ichhā). Sakti, the female member of creation often personified as Sri Laxmi in whom rest the aspect of Kriyā (instrumental cause) and Bhuti (material cause), and the combination of these three saktis is responsible for the Suddha Sristi or pure creation. Laxmi or Kamalā is one of the forms of the ten Mahāvidyās and hence its Upāsanā can be traced to the Pancharātra system. In one of these Pancharātra Samhitās a system known as Rahasyamnaya or a secret method gives a mystic arrangement of letters and formulas, meditation of which by a special mode of worship by means of mantras appears to be a forerunner of the Mahāvidyā Sādhanā. According to this text any person irrespective of caste, creed and colour if resorted to self-surrender and adopted the sceret Sādhanā would attain the supreme bliss. Such texts as Jayaksha Puskar, Parama, Ahirbudhnya etc. were probably composed before and during the Gupta period wherein besides mention of metaphysical and cosmological speculations, typically tāntric topics relating to Vidyā Upāsanā like Jakshini Sādhanā, Chakrayantra Sādhanā, Stambhan etc. have been mentioned. Even these deal with Purascharan, Initiation, Nyāsa with emphasis on Mantra and Homa which indicates that the Mahāvidyā Upāsanā was not novel in its character but only a codification of Vedic, Tāntric and Purānic rites of Upāsanā. Surprisingly, the Ahirbudhnya Samhitā, a Buddhist Text deals elaborately with the different Pancharātra scriptures of which Vyuha is one. This Vyuha is nothing but in consonant with an early form of Sānkhya, an element of Prakṛti or the Female Principle. According to this principle the Bhagavat Vāsudeva in the act of creation produces from himself not only Prakṛti, the indiscreet primal matter of the Sānkhyas, but also a Vyutha or phase of conditioned spirits called Sankarsana. From their combination again sprang manas corresponding to Sānkhya Buddhi. In this way from Vāsudev emanates six qualities in a mythical cronological set up with an enumeration of the 39 Avatars of Vishnu.[9] These six qualities of Vyuhya doctrine may be treated as the Satchakraveda and consequently the worship of the Vidyās or Saktis in each of these places. This similarity of worship is noteworthy in view of Ahirvudhnya Samhitās elaborately dealing with linguistic occultism which is a basic factor in Mahāvidyā Upāsanā. The most important guide regarding the Mahāvidyā thought is the Laxmi

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9. History of the Tantric Religion p. 191.

Tantra, similar in respect of Mahāvidyā Upāsanā but having Vaishnabite character which overwhelms its tāntric rituals. The Laxmi Tantra is a useful work for the study of tāntric Vaishnavism which exclusively brings Laxmi as Sakti of Vishnu thereby paving the path of later development of Sakti Cult where Sakti was thought of as the sine quanon and Vishnu, Siva and Brahmā were nothing without their respective Sakti aspects. This also alludes to the peculiar sādhana of Vāmāchāra with a female partner and a full record of exclusive Sākta Upāsanā within the framework of Pancharātra religion. Here Laxmi has been described like Mahākāli Mahāvidyā devoid of all activity, ever blissfull power embracing the supreme, the primary knowledge (Ādividyā or Mahāvidyā) etc. It is further stated that Aisvarya is her sovereign power to create the Universe without dependence on any factor outside herself or Sakti is immanent, irresistible which pervades the whole of the varigated universe and the Purusa of blue lotus eye is nothing but her form of vijnyana, aisvarya and sakti. It has been further mentioned in this tantra that emanations of Mahāsri, Mahāvidyā and Mahāmāyā were made from Mahālaxmi as has been accepted in case of Mahākāli in Mahāvidyā worship. Evolution of the material world from Prakṛti has been traced in terms of Sānkhya category. It also describes the Avatāras of Laxmi in six sheaths which comes to show that the Mahāvidyās gradually had their ten forms like these Avatārs of Laxmi. This also describes in detail the Tārā and Anutārā mantra with elucidation of these seven vidyās, for example, Tārā Tārā, Anutārā, Vāgbhāva, Kāma, Saraswati and Mahālaxmi. There are other description of methods of initiation, structure of mantras, explanation of mātrukās, origin of letters, mudrās, purification of body, images, worship and Purascharan and the secret tāntric mantra that reveals Laxmi's various manifestations.[10] So it can safely be concluded that these ten Mahāvidyās had its base with all its different aspects from the Laxmi Tantra or at best it is to be thought of a co-lateral Samhitā existing side by side like cult of Tārā and its various emanations. Even texts of Kashmir Saivism which inculudes Rudra Yamala having already its present form by the 9th century has contemplated the Mahāvidyā Upāsanā in unequivocal terms. In Virasaiva system greater importance has been laid upon the doctrine of Sakti and that is why such a system is known as Sakti Visistādwaitavāda by tāntric philosophers. It has been said that Basav freed Saivism from the chains of Varṇāsrama and insisted on physical labour, social supremacy of women, thereby recording a tilting of the society from a religion of male worship to female worship and thereby paving the path for the Mahāvidyā Upāsanā.

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[10] Laxmi Tantra.

It was Saivism that probably supplied a better ground not only for the development of the tantras but also of the Māhavidyā Upāsanā having Mahākāli and Māhakāla on the altar of Upāsanā at the same time on a peculiar posture. Generally four Saiva schools like Saiav, Pāsupata, Karmasiddhānti and Kāpālika were prevalent in the sphere of Indian religion prior to the full development of the Sakti Cult. But some of the Saivasiddhāntis have stated Kālāmukha as the third school which has also been referred to by Srinibas in the Vedānta Kaustuva and Vedattama in his Pancharātra Prāmānya. Some of the comparatively late Purāṇas like the Siva Purāṇa mentions the Kālāmukha Saivas as belonging to the Saiva schools. The Linga Purāṇa refers to the various sects of Vāma, Pāsupata, Soma, Lāngula Kapālavairab and Nakula. There is also Mattamayurak sect that floursihed in the 9th and 10th centuries in central India where they had a number of temples and some scriptural works. It can very well be said that the idol worship, that too placing the idol inside a temple and worship it which was no other than a community worship any was already very familiar in eastern region by the 14th century A.D. had its origin in the worship of Sivalingas by placing them in temples as it was available in case of the Mattamayurak sect. The Virāgama school refers to four schools of Saiva, as Sāmānya Saiva, Purba Saiva, Misra Saiva and Suddha Saiva. Of the subsequent Saiva schools the Pratyavijña school of Kashmir and the Vira Saiva of the Karnatak are well known for their ritualistic details which may be thought of contributing to the ritualistic worship of Mahāvidyā with larger details wherein a Vira has also to be present at the time of worship as a part and parcel of such ritual. We find references to the Pāsupata sect from an inscription belonging to the era of Chandra Gupta II from which it appears that Lakulish the great exponent of Pāsupata sect flourished about the 2nd Century A.D. in the Kathiawad region by which time Sākta and particularly Mahāvidyā Upāsanā had not had its systematic upāsanā method though prevalence of it in some form cannot be completely ruled out. The Pāsupata Sāstra shows that it had five fundamental systems like Kārya, Kārana, Yoga, Biddhi and Dukhānta and Madhava's Sarvadarsan Sangraha fully supports these systems. These Saiva Yamal methods were but tāntric so far their rituals are concerned and herein we find the Lali tantra on which the Bhagavat Sankarapāda has made commentaries and where the specific meanings attached to the Barṇas (letters) have been delineated like those in the Mahāvidyā mantras. (The similarity and the distinction of these mantras will be dealt at the appropriate place.) According to this tradition 28 agamas were produced from the five mouths of the Siva and in Mahāvidyā worship the same Siva is the expounder of Mahāvidyā Sādhanā who is replying to the questions asked by the Devi. Thus the Pāsupata system has a very deep and significant influence on the Mahāvidyā worship. The Āgamānta Saivas appear to have contributed to the development of later tāntric ideas.

The Kāpālikas and the Kālāmukhas were the two extreme offshoots of the Pāsupata system and it is their influence known as Atimārgikas that brought revolution in tantra worship. The Sava Sādhanā and Lalitā Sādhanā system and the Panchamakār puja (worship of five *M*'s) prevalent in Mahāvidyā worship owes its origin to these sects of the Pāsupata system which was very much prevailing in Kashi and Bengal. Isana-Siva-Gurudeva-Paddhati is a tantra of this sect composed by 1100 A.D. having its division as Sāmānyapāda, Mantrapāda, Kriyāpāda and Yogapāda expounding the six categories of Saivism like Pasu, Pāsa, Pati Sakti, Vichār and Kriyāchāra and the Sakti category of this Saivism very broadly delineates the system of Sakti worship which was probably developed to a full-fledged system at a later stage. But it is the Kāshi school of Saivism sponsored by Vāsu Gupta of the 9th Century and his Guru Siva Srikantha, the author of Siva Sutra who established that the Āgama Sāstras are revealations throuh the divine inspiration of Siva and the text of Kashmir Saivism which also includes the Rudra Yamal, famous for elaborate dealing of the

Mahāvidyā Upāsanā in its various forms. Thus, it can be safely told that by the 9th Ceutury A.D. the Mahāvidyā Upāsana has already set its bold feet on the relegious arena of Bhāratavarsa. Avinava Gupta's Tantrāloka and Tantrasāra and Kshemaraj's Pratyavijñā Hrudaya can be safely told as as Sakti tantras wherein the different aspects of Sakti worship and Cult including Mahāvidyā worship have been described as prevalent systems. The Niswāsatattwa Samhita, a manuscript written in Gupta characters found by H. P. Sastri in the Nepal Darbar Library belonging to 8th century A.D. is a great tāntric text consisting of five sutras as Laukikadharma, Mula Sutra, Uttar Sutra, Naya Sutra and Guhya Sutra. The last one is not only extensive but also deals with the fundamentals of Saktitattwa although it has been said in the Mula Sutra that Devi has learnt the doctrine of the Vedānta and the 25 Sānkhyas and then wanted to learn this Sivatattwa from the Lord. This may indicate Sānkhyas' priority over Saivism consequently establishing its preponderance over Mahāvidyā tattwas. This book deals with the initiation and the initiated, sacrifices and the mode of worshipping Siva, Muktidikshyā, the method of Sivālaya Sthāpana, Mātrukā and Homa, Avisheka and Dikshyā and Jñana Yoga, different kinds of Lingas and their Avatārs. Thus, it is clear that in the Indian religious tradition this avatārvāda has been accepted as a sine-qua-non to suit to the different attitudes of the different kinds of worshippers which also explains in a general way the ten different forms of the Mahāvidyā worship arose from Mahākāli of the single Sakti worship. But this Saiva worship according to the Saiva Tantras does not mention the introduction of mystic cult of Devaraj i.e. phallic representation of Siva as inscriptions of Sdok-kak-Thom of Cambodia[11] mentions which probably belongs to the 9th century A.D. and in later Sakti tāntric worship everywhere the Sakti-Siva worship has been shown as the worship of phallus set on the female organ which is unfamiliar to the Mahāvidyā system of worship where the Devi's full forms with the Lord Siva (lying down in some cases) having His full forms, are worshipped. The tantras of Vishnukrāntā region like Sammohan and Niruttar tantras approach very closely to the two of tantras the

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[11] P. C. Vagchi.

Sammohan tantra of Nayottar school and the reading of these tantras of two different schools including the Mundamālā and Chhinnamastā tantra of the Siraschheda school would go to show that the Sakti and Saiva tantras were just having their parallel developments on a similar line. Simultaneously these Mundamālā and Chhinnamastā tantras delineate Mahāvidyā Upāsanā in their different forms and these tantras being similar to the Saiva tantras of Vishnukrānta there is ample ground to believe that the Mahāvidyā Upāsanā was mostly belonging to the eastern region of the Bhāratavarsa, although there is evidence that this system went to the far east as we can find several idol worship in Cambodia and Thailand belonging to this category.

We will later on see that the Brahma Yamal tantra speaks of Mahāvidyā worship and this was a Saiva tantra with Nepal collections. The Palm Leaf Manuscript of the Brahma Yamal dated 172 Nepal Sambat (A.D. 1052) is written in Old-hooked Newary[12]. The Sammohan tantra which deals with various kinds of peethas and countries in which the Kādi and Hādi modes of practice were prevalent is a pure tāntric text showing six-fold classification of tāntric sādhanā. The Brahma Yamal manuscript describes the three currents of sādhanamarga namely, Dakhina, Vama and Madhyama alongwith the forms of their deities, modes of worship, holy places and special importance given to the Bhairabas of the Vidyapeetha and Mantrapeetha.[13] There were also other Nepal collections like Pingalamātā and Jayadratha Yamal wherein we find elaborate discussion on Mantra, Mandala, Dhyāna and explanation of such words like Āgama, Sāstra, Jñāna and the materials for making Lingas and places fit for their installation. The Bhairab conception of the Saiva tantras was fully developed in Buddhist tantras alongwith their Bhairabis and we can trace the influence of this Buddhist system on the Sakti Puja along with the Mahāvidyā worship. According to Dr. N. N. Bhattacharya in the 10th Century A.D. the tāntric phase developed in Northern India, Kashmir and Nepal, into a monstrous and polydemonist doctrine, the Kālachakra, with its demoniacal Buddhas, which incorporated the Mantrayāna practices and called itself the Vajrayāna or the Thunderbolt vehicle. It is merely a coarse tāntric development of the Ādi Buddha theory combined with the puerile mysticism of Mantrayāna and it attempts to explain creation and the secret powers of nature, by the union of the terrible Kāli, not only with the Dhyāni-Buddhas, but even with Buddha himself. But from this it cannot be conclusively said that the Vajrayāna system with these Bhairabs and Bhairabis are precursors of Sakti tantra. Rather it indicates at least a parallel development of this system if not the later antidating the Buddhist Vajrayāni system in view of its long line of developmental flow right from the time of the Atharvaveda and its Upaṇisads and the development of Saiva tantras influenced Sakti worship still extant in the minds of the common people from the dawn of civilization and thereby organised a systematic and independent Sakti worship. The development of Buddhist tantras when the Buddhist religious system was bifurcated from Hinayana to Mahayana and its subsequent desideratum characteristic of Vajrayan could have played a great role in systematising and influencing the Sakti worship as has been held by a number of great scholars like Dr. Bhattacharya because Buddhism had always been looked upon sceptically by the tradition of the Vedās as Vedavāhya and was subsequently uprooted from India after getting its essence assimilated and could not have been the basis of Sakti tantra, similarity of certain aspects of which is attributed to the common traditional influence of Indian religion. In the same way the fact of treating Sakti-tāntric worship as remnants of prehistoric tribal origin does not stand to reason as tribal worship lacks the very basis of tantra where 'Mantra' is treated as 'Devisvarupa' and its iconographic details are symbolic. Besides the Devi in Sakti tantra is never worshipped with awe and wonder rather as primordial Sakti just pregnant for creation on the eve of it. The biography of Dharmaswami which deals with the so called decadent phase of the Buddhism was characterised by its Vajrayana or Buddhist-tāntric forms. Buston's work on the history of Buddhism 'Chos-bhyung' is also very helpful for the study of Buddhist tantra but the most important is Lama Taranath's history 'Gya-gar-chos-byun'. Tāntric elements are also found in the Dharinis which consitute a large part of Mahayāna literature. There are Tibetan version of tāntric sutras collected as early as 4th century A.D. under the title Māhāssānnipāta. The translations of these sutras into Chinese throw much light on tāntric Buddhism. One of the sutras i.e. Prajñāpāramitā sutra contained all the paraphernelia of tāntric worship which is also common with the methods of worship adopted for Sakti and Mahāvidyā Upāsanā. The stotras, the Hrudaya Sutras, Dhārinis and Mantras as contained the Vajrayāna system of Buddhism are very much similar with the methods of Mahāvidyā worship and it is important to note that by 8th century A.D. these elements in Vajrayāna Buddhism were very much prevalent as is evident in the works known as Guhyasamaj, Mahavairochan, Sarvatathagat-tattwasangrah, Vajrasikhar, Vajrabhairav. Chakra Samvar and Manjusrimulakalpa. Of these, the Manjusrimulakalpa and the Guhyasamaj must have been composed by about the 5th or 6th century A.D. The Guhyasamaj is one of the earliest extant Buddhist tantras which means a secret society like Sāktatāntric Cakras which first introduced the tenets of Vajrayan to Buddhism. They are said to have been introduced as a symbol of assembly of the faithful by Lord Buddha who is called here Sarvatathāgata-Kāyabākchitta. It deals mainly with Yoga and Anuttar Yoga and incidentally with Mudrās like that of Sakti tantras and explains the unknowable reality, the source of all Tathāgatas as also of the phenomenal world and how to realise it. According to this text, the truth is Bajra or the oneness of the universe in which there is no distinction between a man and a woman or even between a wife or sister or mother. Kāya or body, bāk or speech and Chitta or mind are called three Bajras and the Guhyasamaj tantra sets forth a goal and its method for realization of Buddhahood and attainments of miraculous powers such as killing an enemy with magical rites, causing rainfall in a drought, and largely the methods for the attainment of Siddhi which is of two kinds, Sāmānya and Uttam.· It illustrates six angas of Yoga omitting the first three of Pāttanjali and adding Anusmṛti to it. Besides it knows all six black acts like Sānti for averting diseases, Vasikarana for bewitehing, stambhana—stopping the movement of others, Bidvesan—creating bad blood, Ucchatana—driving away persons and Marana—killing. This tantra also permits the use of several kinds of flesh and allows the killing of animals, speaking untruth, intercourse with women including even incests with mother, sister and daughter. Though this tantra method of worship has been adopted generally in Mahāvidyā worship having at times weakness for the black acts, the attitude in Mahāvidyā worship is fundamentally different from this Vajrayani attitude in as much as the Devi in Mahāvidyā worship is treated as mother with all reverences and surrender by the worshipper instead of treating her as a woman with whom even incest can be practised as in Vajrayan. Thus while Vajrayani system corrupted the society and was thereby made responsible for biding a good-bye to the entire Buddhist religion from the soil of its birth, the Mahāvidyā worship as a true religion has been surviving even to the present day. The Manjusrikalpa included in the Tibetan Kanjur, a Chinese translation of 10th century A.D. of it, deals with the legendary biography of Buddha upto his Nirvāṇa. This work describes the observances of moral precepts, austerities, offering of oblations, muttering of prayers and meditations for success in mantra cult and also instructs that initiation may be made under the guidance of a Mantrāchārya, It also names and defines 108 mudrās and holds that the combination of mudrās and mantras bring success instead of observing vows and fasts prescribed by various Sāstras. Thus, the muttering of mantra and adopting mudrās in this Buddhist tantra was similar to that of the Sakti tantra and Mahāvidyā worship wherein initiation by a Guru and the worship of the Devi by different yantras, mantras and mudrās are important for success or siddhi in Mahāvidyā worship. Unlike observances of vows and fasts prescribed by Purāṇas and Dharmasāstras, a section of the Manjusrikalpa is devoted to Patavidhana i.e. direction for drawing pictures of different Buddhas, Bodhisattwas, Tārā and other Goddesses as also of the Yakhyas and Yakhinis. A book recently published on the Patachitras of Dasa Mahāvidyās in Orissa confirms to these Buddhist drawings. From this it cannot be conclusively told that this Vajrayani Buddhist tantra was the forerunner which influenced the Mahāvidyā worship. However, this much can be told that while the Vajrayani system adopted the methods of worship in its own secret way, the secrecy was also known to the worshippers of other contemporary and earlier religions like Sāktas and Pāsupatas, who were also adopting similar methods of worship of Gods and Goddesses, although having insignificant variations here and there. It is therefore, interesting to find that

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[12] P. C. Vagchi.

[13] Jayadratha Yamala.

Manjusrikalpa does not mention Vajrayana, rather use the word Mantrayana which may be thought of composed not only for the Buddhist worshippers but to benefit and guide all tāntric worshippers of the age. The Siddhyamala is a similar collection of numerous siddhas i.e. conceptual description of meditation forms and ritualistic aspects of Buddhist deities intended for the attainment of Siddhi which is miraculous power of self realisation. Tibetan version of this book preserved in Tanjur collection also named as Sādhanā Sammuchaya mentions 312 different kinds of Sādhanās, the philosophy of tāntric tradition and psychic exercise including names of tāntric authors and Siddhas, Mantras and Mandals etc. This book has clearly differentiated the Buddhist deities from those of the Hindus and the Jains and has prescribed for the realisation of a particular God or Goddess according to a fixed procedure. The worshipper is asked to identify himself with the deity and it is said that Gods have no independent real existence apart from that in the minds of worshippers in a form like that of mantra caitanya of Mahāvidyā. Though similar method or procedure has been adopted in Mahāvidyā worship having a fixed mantra for each of the Mahāvidyās it has different Yantras, Dhyānas, Hrudayas and Kabachas. Mahāvidyā worship also explains the principle of Prāṇapratisthā like that of the Sādhanamālā that prescribes identification of self with the deity before worship. But the Mahāvidyā worship certainly admits the external form of the deity either in the form of mantra or yantra or even a clear expression of an idol. But the Buddhist tāntric gods possess no external form as is evident from Sādhanamālā and believe only in the pure mental conception of the deity by the aspirant. The mandals of Buddhist worship is just like Yantras of Mahāvidyā worship and we find a detailed description of 26 mandals in the Nispanna Yogābali written by Abhayakara Gupta. The iconographical studies revealed from this work would be of great help in discriminating the Sākta icons from those of the Buddhist. Another important Buddhist tantra i.e. Prajñyopaya Vinischayasiddhi which was composed about 705 A.D. by Anangabajra, a venerable Siddha of Tibet has had a similar approach to the male and female principles of Hindu tenets. The Vajrayāni system dealing mainly with the concept of Prajñā and Upāya, thus conceived as female and male principles. According to this text neither duality nor non-duality is the state of perfection rather wisdom conceived as the female principle and the means of its attainment through the male are to be combined in one's own self for the purpose of liberation which is perfect enlightenment through practical experience of the female principle. Prajñā or wisdom is associated with a state of intense wisdom called Sukha or Mahāsukha which is conducive to complete enlightenment as is thought of the highest achievement or mukti in Mahāvidyā worship along with Bhukti. Interestignly this text has identified Prajñā with a woman of flesh and blood and has as a natural consequence the concept of Mahāsukha which is sought to be explained in terms of sexual symbolism, unlike the Mahāvidyā worship which though exhibits the male and female gods in one unity has no iota of sexual symbolism far from any incest to be practised with one's own kith and kin and blood relations as has been vicariously contemplated in Vajrayāna Buddhism. The He-Vajratantra or tāntric Buddhism supposed to be a work of 8th century A.D. speaks 'He-Vajra' as the technical name for the Buddhist supreme being in the non-dual state. In particular, He-Bajra is a Heruka in union with his Sakti in yuganandha position and has been thought of for the process of worship by which enlightenment can be attained. The term Sakti does not occur in this text and in its place the word Prajñā has been adopted. The text describes how the followers of the tantra have sexual experience with women called mudrās and thereby attain siddhi. It also deals with the Kāyāsadhana and holds there are 32 Nadis in the body which carry the Boddhichitta upward ultimately pouring it into the place of great bliss 'Mahāsukhasthāna'. This may be equated with the Kundalini Yoga at Sahasrar of the Sakti and Mahāvidyā system, although the fact of attaining Siddhi by so called mudrās of sex are not contemplated in Mahāvidyā worship or the Sakti worship. The He-Vajra is characterised as the Mahāsamaya of the Yogis written in a Sandhyābhāsā. The Mahāsamaya like Mahākāla of Pasupata and Sākta systems denotes the doctrine of the school represented by the He-Vajra and this tantra alongwith its cults was practised in the tantrapeethas like Jalandhar, Oddiyan, Purnagiri and Kamarupa which are celebrated Sākta peethas. It may not be out of place to say that Oddyiana peetha is no other place than Orissa where Vajra

Yāna was spread and established for quite some time and influenced the entire religion of the belt ultimately settled as a people's religion of Jagannath Cult free from the constraints of sect, caste or creed or even male or female where there is no distinction among the devotees except that with the Lord who is also not kept apart from the devotee but is worshipped as a very near and dear being. The obeisance to Lord Jagannath in the form of 'ālingan' is evidently a symbolical representation of Mahāsukha of Vajrayana Buddhism.

Now we may come to the range of the Sākta tantras which are very wide in extent and nature and at times including works of other tāntric schools especially those of the Saivas. According to this traditional Sākta school, Sakti is inherent in Siva as the power of burning is in fire, The supposed 5 faces of Siva i.e. Isān, Tatpurusa, Sadyojāta, Bāmadeva and Aghora symbolise the functioning of Sakti in the sphere of Consciousness (Chitta), Bliss (Ananda), Will (Ichhā), Knowledge (Jñāna) and Action (Kriyā) respectively. It is supposed that these 5 mouths of Lord Siva had initially produced ten Āgamās like Kāmika, Yogaj, Chintyā, Mukuta, Ansumān, Dipta, Adita, Sukhma, Sahasra and Supraveda. These were the precursors of the Rudrāgamas namely Vijay, Niswās, Madgita, Parameswar, Mukhabimba, Siddha, Sanātan, Narasingh, Chandrānsu, Viravadra, Āgneya, Svayambhu, Bisar, Raurav, Bimala, Kiran, Lalit, and Saumeya. All these together constitute the 28 Saiva Āgamas, although this can very well be said that in Sakti tantras Siva has been conceived not as an independent deity, but an ādhāra of its Sakti. Traditionally it is believed that the southern face of Siva (i.e. Dakhsinamukhi) represents the principles of non-duality and is called Yoginivaktra, the other four faces representing the denotative denotate, extinguishing and the extinguished aspects of the Siva. However, all these constitute and combine the form of 64 Bhairagavāgamas classed under 8 Astakas as listed below :

1. Bhairavastaka
2. Yamalāstaka
3. Matakhyastaka
4. Mangalāstaka
5. Chakrāstaka
6. Sikshyāstaka

7. Bahurupāstaka
8. Vāgisāstaka

Under these different Astakas a large number of Āgamas or tantras were found extant over and above a number of Sākta tāntric texts as referred in Vārahi tantra. These are Nilapatākā, Vamakeswar, Mṛtyunjaya, Yogārṇav, Māyā or Maha, Dakshinamurti, Kālika, Kāmeswari, Haragouri, Kubjikā, Kātyāyani, Pratyangirā, Mahālaxmi, Tripurārṇav, Saraswati, Yogini, Vārāhi, Gavākshi, Nārayaniya and Mruḍani. Although all these Sakti tantras are not important to our subject of discussion but most of them like Kālika, Saraswati, Mahalaxmi and Tripurārṇav etc. deal with Mahāvidyā worship and are therefore. important for our reference. A good number of these texts are found in manuscript forms and a few of them have been published; even these manuscripts belong to a much later date. But from this, it cannot be concluded that the Sakti tantras were of recent origin but were old works having their earlier existence and lost in course of time, although kept in memory by the traditional Gurus as pointed out by Dr. Bhattacharya in his history of the Tāntric Religion. Subsequently the tāntric texts were written again in the medieval and the late medieval period. on the basis of the oral traditions preserved by a succession of teachers. This may be exemplified with reference to the Kubjikā tantra as quoted by H. P. Sastri that it belongs to a distinct school in which were also included different branches of tantra like Srimata, Kādimata, Vidyapeetha etc. The original Kubjikā literature consisted of four Satkas each comprising of 6,000 verses. There is also a manuscript preserved by the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta written in Gupta character. There are many such earlier works which were lost and sometimes revived after a lapse of few centuries thereby losing most of its voluminous character and appearing in an incomplete form at a later time. There were also a number of Tāntric Digests and commentaries like Bhutadāmar; Jayadratha Yāmal, Graha Yāmal, Devi Yāmal, Nitya, Niruttar, Gupta Sādhana, Chāmundā, Mundamālā Mālinivijay, Bhutasuddhi, Mantramahodadhi, Tripurāsāra, Tripurārahasya, Kulārṇav, Jñānārṇav, Mahā Kaula Jñāna Vinirmaya, Prapanchasāra, Sāradātilaka, Matsyasukta, Mahānirvāṇa etc. of which the Devi Yāmal, Chāmuṇḍā, Mundamālā, Tripurārahasya etc. mention several aspects of Mahāvidyā worship. Yoginihrudaya of Dipika commentary which was composed by Amrutananda Nath and Tantra-Rajtantra associated with the earlier forms of Yogini and Mrudani Tantras were also important tāntric texts. The Rudra Yāmal tantra an authoritative work on the tantras has depicted the Mahāvidyā Upāsanā in more clearer and distinct forms which will be discussed later. The Saktisangama tantra mentions different tāntric sects including Chinăchāra. It consists of four parts as Kāli, Tārā, Sundari and Chhinnamastā devotiug to the worship of these deities in every detail which are four distinct forms of the Mahāvidyā. The Tārā tantra in six Patalas and 106 verses depicts the Tārā Upāsanā and also refers to the Tārā-Vasistha legend and Buddha as a tāntric teacher. The Tārā tantra opens with the following questions of Devi Tārā or Mahānilasarswati : "Thou didst speak of the two Kula Bhairavas, Buddha and Vasistha. Tell me by what mantra they became Siddha ?" Thus, Devi Tārā is originally conceived as a Buddhist deity. Mr. A. K. Maitra, the editor of Tārā tantra quoting from both Rudra Yāmal and Brahma Yāmal narrates the story of Vasistha's obtaining the Vāmāchāra dikshyā prevalent in China. According to Rudra Yāmal, the sage Vasistha practised severe austerities for six thousand years in a lonely spot but the Goddess did not appear to him. Thereafter he went to his father Brahmā and obtained a different matnra from him and further practised austerities ; even then the Goddess did not appear. So he became angry and having sipped water was going to utter a terrible curse on the deity. There upon the Goddess appeared to him and pointed out that he had not taken the right mode of Sādhanā. So she advised him to go to Mahachina, the country of the Bauddhas. Vasistha then went to China and having repeatedly bowed to the ground addressed the Buddha as Mahādeva and opened his mind before him as how can inclinations to Vedaviruddhāchāra, i.e. indulgence in wine and women would purify his mind and how can there be siddhi without Vedic rites. Buddha explained the Kaula rites and got Vasistha acquainted with secret rites for practice which conveyed Vasistha eventually attaining final liberation by unrestrained use of the 'Panchamakārs'. The Brahma Yāmal story though similar in contents indicates that Vasistha was practising austerities on the blue mountain i.e. Nilāchala. According to tāntric scholars it has been identified with the site of the celebrated Goddess Kāmākshyā of Kamarupa ; but the word 'Nilāchala' is associated with Lord Jagannath's seat alone as it is so told even to the present day. The Dasa Avatār Murti in the front gate of the Jagannath temple shows Jagannath as the 9th Avatār instead of Buddha. So Vasistha's approach to Buddha with eyes drooping from wine would be very well associated with the Jagannath of Nilāchal, Puri who is also supposed to be the Bhairava having Vimalā as its Bhairavi. The word Chināchār as has been accepted by various scholars as a method of worship obtaining in China is not definitely sound in view of the fact that Vasistha went to a place named as Buddha Pratisthā i.e. where Buddha has been established or installed and where the worship or āchār was opposed to Veda i.e. 'Vedabādabiruddha' and such a method not being prāchina or traditional has been known as chināchār as it involves worship by Panchamakār i.e. Madya, Mānsa, Maithuna etc. Since Orissa was called as Uddiyan, a famous tantra peetha in Tantra Sāstras such a probability of Vasistha, a traditional Brāhmin taking initiation in a non-traditional method of worship in Orissa was quite probable. It is difficult to accept Sri Bhattachary's thinking[14] in the line of Mr. A. K. Maitra that Vasistha's going to China for initiation is more probable due to the fact that flower offered to Devi Tārā is Jabā which is a Chinese rose. The mention of Jabā Puspa in Indian tradition is older than even the Devi worship. Even we invoke Āditya, the Sun God of the Vedas having its form as 'Jabā Kusuma Sankāsam'. So it appears that the story of Rudra Yāmal and Brahma Yāmal has been misinterpreted. It can at best be thought of the conversion of a famous Brāhmanic priest of Vasistha clan to Vajrayāni system of Buddhism and it is more probable because this Vajrayāni system had subsequently lost it identity in Sakti worship which is a natural tendency in the Indian tradition to assimilate different kinds of religious thoughts into the traditional religion of Hinduism.

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[14] History of the Tantric Religion, pp. 101-103.

Lastly, the Mahānirvāṇa which is a late but important work containing much of the earlier traditions very elaborately discussed the sophisticated tāntric tradition of worship with all details. Sankarācharya's Prapanchasāra and Saundaryalahari contain much information on different aspects of Sakti cult. But the most important tāntric digest is Sāradātilaka of Laxmandesika. It was composed in about 11th Century A.D. having a good commentary as Padārthādarsa of Raghava Bhatta of 15th Century illucidating different aspects of Sakti tantra including different types of Upāsanā; Purnānanda's Shyāmārahasya deals with various rites in connection with the worship of the Goddess Shyāmā i.e. Kāli. He has also another work to his credit. Sritattwachintāmani delineating the cult of Srividyā which is similar to the Kamalātmika Upāsanā of Dasa Mahāvidyā. The vast tāntric literature shows a large number of books of Tārā, the second of the Mahāvidyā order. The Tārārahasya, Tārābhaktisudhārṇav etc. although late compositions show a deviation from the Buddhist character of Tārā. Tantrasāra of Krushnānandāgama Vāgisa with its most erudite commentary of Bhaskar Roy is a very rich compendium of different tāntric system with every minor details of Upāsanā by ten different methods of mantra, Yantra, stava, dhyāna, hrudaya, kabacha etc. Nilakāntha who flourished in the middle of 11th Century is famous for his commentary on the Devi Bhāgabat which expounds the Sākta tāntric ideas in a very greater detail and the Mahāvidyā Upāsaṇā has been found elaborately dealt with in this Purāna. Of the most recent works the Prāṇatoshini compiled by Ramatoshan Vidyālankār is a very popular treatise on the tantra sāstra. This work explains the mantras and their efficacies in attainment liberation i.e. Mukti along with Bhukti. Kulārṇava tantra is an important tāntric text which was probably composed prior to 1000 A.D. According to this tantra the Kuladharma is the essence of the Vedas. One who has studied the Vedas but is ignorant of Kuladharma is inferior to a Chandāla while a Chandāla who knows it is superior to a Brāhmaṇa. Despite this overtone of Kuladharma's bearing on Varṇāsramadharma the under current depicts the rigidity of caste system dividing a Brāhmin from a Chaṇḍāla. It reiterates that Siva is called Akula and Sakti Kula and that every woman is born in the kula of the great mother and hence she must be regarded as an object of veneration. This has elaborately dealt the Panchamakār Puja although explained them in as esoteric manner, that wine is equated with the nectar oozing from the Sahasrapadma, meat is the symbol of flesh of ego cut with the sword of knowledge, sexual union is suggestive of the union of highest Sakti with self. It also lays down the principles of Purascharana of a mantra, dikshyā, nyās, Yantra and other tāntric symbols which are adopted in the Mahāvidyā Upāsanā. The Parānanda Sutra of 900 A.D. expounds the three ways of Sādhana i.e. Dakshinamārga, sanctioned by the Vedas, Smṛtis and Purānas, the Vāmamārga by the Vedas and Agamas and the Uttarmārga by the words of Guru or Preceptor. The Vāmamārga is superior to the Dakhinamārga although inferior to Uttaramārga. The Vāmamārga is of two kinds and these prescribe the Panchamakār method for attainment of Mukti. It has been mentioned herein that the Preceptor, who should preferably be a Jibanmukta collects the materials of the Panchamakāras and hands over to the disciple a bowl for drinking wine, mudrā (fired cereal) and woman (generally a courtesan). Most interestingly this tantra states a woman even a courtesan as Brāhman and Sakti incarnate, always and in all conditions the purest entity and herein we find the details of sexual technique most of which may appear repulsive and vulgar and contrary to the philosophy of Mahāvidyā Upāsanā although similar methods are adopted in the latter. The Sāradātilaka of 11th Century A.D. describes Siva as both Nirguna and Saguna having its two aspects. When Siva is identical with Sakti and Prakruti it is Saguna, from Sakti or Prakruti evolves Nāda and from this Nāda arose the Bindu. It is again subdivided into Aparābindu, Bija and Aparānāda. Aparābindu is identified with Siva, Bija identified with Sakti and Nāda with both Siva and Sakti. Sakti also in Parāsakti and Parādevatā is conceived as Sabdabrahma and that flash of light in the Ādhāra assumes the form of Kundalini in the human body. From Siva in the form of the said Bindu comes out in succession Sadāsiva, Isa, Rudra, Vishnu and Brahma. Although the Sānkhya system of philosophy has similar such conception, this tāntric yoga system has been very elaborately dealt and practised in Mahāvidyā Upāsanā. The allpervading and at the same time the subtle Sakti remains coiled like a serpent in her kula-kundalini form and becomes manifest in the form of 50 letters of Sanskrit alphabets which are shown as a garland of heads worn by the Devi Mahākāli.[15] This book divides the mantras into masculine i.e. those ending in hum and phat and feminine i.e. those ending in Swahā and lastly neuter those ending in Nāmah. A very cogent relationship has been established between the alphabets and the six psychic planes in human body known as chakras and mantras as has been described as the expression of Mahāvidyās themselves such as Kāli, Tripurā, Bhubaneswari, Laxmi etc. It also refers to Satkarmas dealing with mantras for magical purpose in the line of Atharvaveda for bringing women under control, destruction of the enemy etc. in this tantra as has been found in the Mahāvidyā Upāsanā. The drawing of Yantras for wicked purposes are described here unlike the Yantras for Upāsanā purpose as has been systemetised in the Mahāvidyā worship. The way of infusing life into the mantras and Yantras are also found in this book. It has also been adopted in Mahāvidyā worship. But among these tantras Mahānirvāṇa tantra which has been more popularly accepted confirms the Hindu tenet in general. It upholds a Sākta monotheism that Durga as the highest Prakruti who is also known by the names of the Mahāvidyā Goddess, assumes various forms for the sake of the devotees and also for the destruction of the demons. It is perfectly in line with the thinking in the Gita that the Lord assumed forms when there is 'Dharmaglani[16] and devotees are troubled by miscreants and also with the line of thinking of Bhagavat that the Lord though subtle assumes form for the sake of his devotees[17]. The Chakra rituals with Panchamakār tattvas are also elaborately dealt with in this tantra along with Srāddha, Prāyaschitta, Vyāvahāra, Dikshyā, Nyāsa, Purascharan, Mantra and Mudrā etc. The Rudra Yāmal contains a panegeric of Atharvaveda showing that all Gods, all beings, all sages, Kāmavidyā and Mahāvidyā dwell in it. The details of Mahāvidyā worship as we find today were extant from this tantra. It deals with the mysterious Kundalini, Yogic practices and the six chakras in the body. It states that a Vira should drink wine and use a beautiful woman who is capable of arousing sexual passion. This may be his own wife or another's. It states that Buddha himself indoctrinated the five *Ms*. Although the Mahāvidyā Upāsanā stotras were available from this Rudra Yāmal tantra in a large extent it will be discussed later how the thinking and the system of Upāsanā recorded a shifting from the original sexual predominance to a subtle inner worship and yoga. The Saktisangama tantra holds that Kulāchāra in general is nothing but the cult of Sakti in any of her forms although a special method of worship done with wine, flesh, fish, cereals and sexual union. The knowledge of these tattvas has to be conveyed by the Guru and it is stated that the Devi manifests herself for the destruction of Buddhists and the other heretic sects for removal of confusion brought by them to the religion in the line of the Vedas. Thus Saktisangama tantra though similar in content with Rudra Yāmal, the attitude of Devi worship and the methodical difference between the two are clearly distinct which will be discussed in greater detail while dealing with the Upāsanā tattva. This tantra has also interpreted the five *Ms* unlike the ordinary popular sense in which it has been accepted by the later Buddhists known as Vajrayanis and by dividing the entire book into the Kāli, Tārā, Sundari and Chinnamastā parts elaborately dealing with their methods of worship. This is a composition of Sixteenth or Seventeenth Century.

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[15] The Garland of Letters, J.W.

[16] Srimadbhagavadgita, IV-7

[17] Srimadbhagavata (भक्तार्थं सगुणों जातः निराकारोंऽपि चिन्मयः)

The so-called black arts or magical rites described in some of the tantras owe its origin to the Atharvaveda dealing with Abhicāra, Strikarma, Sāmmanasya and Paustika rites. The same tradition also continued in Purāṇa age. The Agnipurāṇa devotes Ch. XXXVIII to it completely. The Matsyapurāṇa refers to rituals for the purpose of bringing a woman under control. It also describes Uchhātanas and Māraṇa methods. While describing Vidvesaṇa and Abhichāra it has been described to prepare a triangular Kunda on which homa should be offered by the priests wearing red flowers, red sandalwood paste, sacred thread in the apasavya way and also in red turbans and red garments. The effigy of the enemy should then be cut into pieces and offered to the fire as homa. But the similar action in the

Mahāvidyā Upāsanā is intended to keep away the enemies in the body and mind so as to conduct worship of the deity without interruption.

When we consider tantra as a method of worship it may not be lost sight of the aspersions made against it by some famous orientalists like H. H. Wilson and others. According to them, the sole subjects of the tantra were sensual rites and black magic and the tāntric rituals nonsensical extravagance and nyāsas are absurd gesticulations. Sir John Woodroffe has met this objection in his accomplished book, *Principles of Tantra* that H. H. Wilson was doubtless a distinguished orientalist but the matters in his book from want of sympathy and knowledge have been greatly misunderstood. Wilson's thinking regarding the nature of Bija as 'monosyllabic ejaculations of emagined mysterious import' and his interpretation of the esoteric mantra[18] '*Pitwa Pitwa Punah Pitwa*' as a tāntric counsel of drunkenness as a means to secure mukti exhibits want of understanding of this great Hindu Sāstra which cannot be properly understood by a lingustic talent however great. Similar interpretations of the sloka '*Matruyonim Partityajya Viharet Sarvayonisa*' as a supposed injunction to practice incest is equally thoughtless and unfair. Wilson's erroneous statement that the mudrās of Panchamakār are mystical gesticulations would be well known as in fact the term means parched cereal food of various kinds. Similarly, the verse 'Matruyoni' does not mean that incest may be committed with any woman save one's mother but that in doing recitation of the Saktimantra mind is to be made on all the joints (yoni) of the fingers except of the two upper joints of the first (index) finger technically in such case called the Matruyoni. Similarly in the case of Japa of the Mantra of a male Devatā the two lower joints of the middle finger are called Matruyoni. It would, therefore, be very unfair to think of tantras as full of silly and vulgar superstition and magic because the language of the tantras are esoteric and secret and it has been clearly laid down as injunction of the tantra sāstra that these should not be taught to persons of pasvāchār i.e. those who are not Viras having Kuladharma as a pre-requisite practice for entering into the arena of tantra sāstra. The tantra in fact contains many a technical term and secret doctrine which are not to be understood by sole aid of a Sanskrit dictionary and grammar. It is due to the strenuous effort of Sir John Woodrooffe which exposed the real technical meaning of the tantras by extensively editing a large number of tantra books thereby bringing a revolution in the minds of the intelligentia not only of the east but of the western world that the tantra sāstra as a whole has not been properly understood with right understanding the system would appear as singularly rational and psychologically profound and perhaps most elaborate system of auto-suggestion and it has been rightly remarked that all aspersions against this great sāstra is nothing but a rather foolish expression of annoyance which is felt at the presence of something not understood.

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[18] Principles of Tantra, J. W. Note 2, p. 5

But naturally the question arises if the tantras are religious text in the line of the Vedas, what was the necessity of such a Sāstra when the Vedas and its practices were prevalent. In this context we may rightly recollect the social conditions obtaining in the Vedic times where a specific class of people were in charge of religion and religious rites although there were sporadic references of persons from other caste taking interest any such religious act as the Brahmins, who were repository of the Vedas and Vedic knowledge including religious rites. The large mass of the people including women were not associated with the methods of religion and regarded the Vedas and Yajñas as religious rites with awe and reverence. In fact, we have in the tantra the recognition of the fine principles of the tāntric doctrine and its expression in rituals available to the people of varying competency regardless of their race, caste or sex. The Sudras and women although were under norm of the Vedic bans but because of the elaborate systems of the tāntric rituals suited to various degrees of the competency of the people in society, it was rather more at hand to this section of the society and it is singularly praiseworthy that the tantras have high veneration of women at a time when the dawn of civilization has even not peeped into the mother earth in the other parts of the world. When the Vedic Ṛsis declared mukti as secondary desire in the religious worship of the Devatās and the Upanishads predominantly inculcated the desire of mukti, it is the tantras that conglomerated these to high desires of Mukti and Bhukti and enunciated methods for their attainment. That is why the Agama or Tantra laid emphasis on both the attainments equally and made no distinction beetween men and women for they compose equally human kind eligible for Sakti Sādhana. The tantra even goes to the extent of saying that ill treatment of women is held to be a crime as it means to ill-treat a Sakti as women have been considered as manifestations of the great cause of all (Kāran) Sakti and therefore entitled to be respected and even to be treated with veneration. Whoever offends them incurs the wrath of Prakruti, the mother of all, whilst who propiciated them, offers worship to Prakruti herself. It is interesting to point out that according to Tantra a woman may be a spiritual teacher and initiation by her brings immediate benefit and that initiation by a mother of her son is eight-fold more beneficial than any other. Such thinking of the tantra apart from its religious rites is really noteworthy in the Indian soul as it has no parallel even in the west notwithstanding the increaing recognition of the place of women in society where her right of spiritual thinking is still denied to the present day. The tantra being an encyclopedic amalgam of elements of varying character and worth extending from the doctrines of a lofty speculation to practices which the higher occultism once suspect and to prescriptions which may be used for the purposes of evil-intentioned magic[19]. So it is to be properly understood before hurling abuses indiscriminately at it. There might be some persons as is natural in a vast society, wicked and obscene which have been corrupted the system of the tantra sāstra but it will be unwise to hold the sāstra responsible for these abuses. It is equally unwise to think that the Tantra brought degeneracy to Bharatavarsa by wild ignominous practices concerning wine and women. Because in society the greater evils are wine and women not only in the East but also in the West and the Tantras have taught for their sublimation by five *M*s worship whereas these vices still dominate the World society of elites even despite progress of science for which neither science nor scientists can be held responsible. Similarly, to treat tantra intellectually as 'brainless hocus pocus' and morally a mere facile reversal of the high notions of Dharma is improper as the devoted Sādhakas of Tantra have paved the path of the Yogic sādhana by concentrating on the six centres of bliss and enjoyments unlikely to meet with in the material world. If we consider the present day Hindu rituals it is in its practical aspect largely tāntric. The knowledge of the Vedas, the worship according to the tāntric methods and Yogasadhan are the three extant religious rites that still alone come with full knowledge without which the religious and philosophical conceptions of the land are likely to be but poorly understood. The present development of Upāsanā and Sādhanā can only be learnt from Tantra which is the mantra and Sādhana sāstra available to the present day by world traditions. According to the Mahānirvāṇa Tantra the tantra is attributed to Lord Siva which has been revealed by him and scribed by Ganesh. In order to understand the tantras with all its varied aspects as a secret doctrine one has to hold the key from a learned expert. It has been said verily and without a doubt that Veda sastras and Purāṇas are like a common harlot free to all but the doctrine of Sambhu i.e. tantra is like a secret house-bride. The key to the method has been with the initiate and it is this initiate who can bring home the technical character of terminology of tantra sāstra and an attempt to understand them by a common or general understanding would make the matter more complex due to the esoteric character of the rituals and extent of the peculiar traditions known as amnāyas and various āchāras which are technical and not easily intelligible to the common mass. It is really interesting to realise that reasoning, argument and inference may be the work of other branches of knowledge but the work of tantra is to accomplish superhuman and divine events by the force of its mantras and realise the life's aim in this life without waiting for a life beyond as conceived by the Vedic method. It may look obscene to some of the so called intelligent men to worship Devi with tāntric rites who is considered as a supersensual revelation with dishevelled hair appearing in great cremation grounds to dispel fear from the hearts of Her devotees and granting them liberation. But a tantra sādhaka alone can understand its significance. According to religious concept of the Hindus in different ages it is faith and not reasoning which enables a man in the line to realise the supreme truth because the reasoning is the outcome of intellect or Buddhi which is supposed to be under the fold of Māyā i.e. illusion. Therefore, all the Hindu Sāstras—Sruti, Smṛti, Purānas and Tantras have their own time of guiding people and the last with the tantra is the specific scripture of the fourth or the Kali age revealed by Siva for the benefit of the people in Kali Yuga who are unable to endure the rigorous austerities and sādhanas adopted by the people of three former Yugas i.e. Satya, Tretā and Dwāpara. Like the Vedas the Tantras have been thought of apauruseya i.e. manifested to the Ṛsis who were not their authors but only seers and that is why it has been said that the tantra is also a sruti (नैन्दिकी तान्त्रिकी चैव द्विविधा कीर्त्तिता श्रुता:). Besides the Mahānirvāṇa and Kubjka Tantras have also held that 'Krite Srutyuktāchāra stretāyyang smrtisambhavah ; Dvapare tu purāṇoktam kalau āgamakevalam'. It may appear from the very face of the fact that such a thinking that tantras are apauruseya like Vedas is a wild thought not subject to reason. But the chapters hereafter described on the indestructibility of the letters and sounds would amply clear the reasoning behind such a statement. However, coming to the specific sāstra for the Kali Yuga i.e. Agama or Tantra it is to be understood that the deities to be worshipped in Tantras are the Siva and Sakti or the Sakti alone. It is interesting to note that not only Siva and Devi are worshipped in tantras but the other three Devatās in the Panchadevatā tenet—Vishnu, Ganesh and Surya are also worshipped in tantric method. So it indicates that a time came when the Vedic upāsanā of gods having no forms and consisting of Yajñas and other minor rites were fully overwhelmed by the tāntric Panchadevatā Upāsanā, so much so that the Vedic mantra, Gāyatri was used as a tāntric method i.e. tantra gāyatri in tāntric Sāndhyopāsanā. But this development of Upāsanā from formless to form though not started in Tāntric religion but was systematised in it. The Vedāntic idea with all the phenomenal word as illusory was not acceptable to human kind because of the existence of very form of human beings and the vast expanse of the phenomenal world around existing from time immemorial. If at all man has obtained this form from subtle source it was thought that this source must have come by way of evolution which could be attained by the reverse process of involution and therefore, the present form must be having a clue or key to unfold that formless truth and hence the tantra equates the pinda with Brahmānda in a psycic and spiritual sphere and the ultimate truth must be having its alter somewhere inside this body which is to be revealed and this revelation is the 'be all and end all' of tāntric worship, and that is perhaps the goal of all human efforts.

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[19] Principles of Tantra, Volume-1, pp. 3-12

The Nirvāṇa Tantras conceive a Mahābrahmānda or grand cosmos from which evoloved numerous Bṛhat Brahmāndas or macrocosms abounding in heavenly bodies and beings who are having pindas or microcosm. The pindas reveal in a smaller scale the Brahmānda as Visvasāra Tantra explains :

'Yadhihasti tadanyatra yannetasti na tatkvacit.'

The macrocosm has its meru or vertebral column extending from top to bottom. There are fourteen regions descending from Satyaloka, the highest. These are the seven upper and seven nether worlds viz. Bhuh, Bhuvah, Svah, Mahar, Janah, Tapas, Satya and Narka (Sutala, Vitala, Talātala, Mahātala, Rasātala, Atala and Pātālas). Similarly the meru of human body in the spinal column and within it are the cakras in which the worlds are said to dwell in micro form[20]. Satya has been said to be in the Sahasrār, and Tapah, Janah, Mahat, Svah, Bhuvah, Bhuh in Ajña, Visuddhi, anāhata, manipura, Svādhisthāna and mulādhara lotuses respectively. Below mulādhāra and in the joints, sides, arm and organ of generation are the nether worlds. As the worlds are supported by the Prāna and other Vayu so is the body supported by the ten Vayus[21]. There is the same Ākāsa in both. The witness within is the purusa without, for the personal soul of the microcosm, corresponds to the cosmic soul (Hiranyagarbha) in the macrocosm.

In short it will be unwise to regard the Tantra Sāstra as a petty sāstra of any religious sect or to limit its operation to a particular method or division of worshippers. As the fire worship was regarded as the ritual inculcated in the Vedas so the different symbols adopted by the Tāntric texts speaks of the same spiritual truth. The Temple worship may on its side be also said to assume a similar importance in regard to Āgamas. The words Agamas and Nigamas are equally applied to Tantra Sāstra, although originally the Vedas were called the Nigamas. At present the entire world of the Tantra Sāstra has been divided into two nomenclatures i.e. one, where Lord Maheswar is the expositor of the Devi's question and hears, is called Agama and where Devi is expositor and Maheswar's doubts are cleared, it is called Nigama[22]. Most of the Tantras adhered to Vaidic injunctions Agamas with the description of the various parts of the body of the Devi, her ornaments and garments and all other auxiliary and supplementary tantras with the hair on her body. The body of the great Iswari is contemplated upon under the form of all tantras as has been mentioned as 'Sarvatanrarupa' in Karma Purāṇa. Herein the Devi has said in all these sāstras i.e. tantras have been created by her in order to save the people of the world steeped in illusion. The gradual development of Tantra Sāstra says that nearly we come to a position where the scriptures are not found opposed to Sruti or Smṛti and assume the name of Sākta Tantra which has been very commonly applied to all tantras, although Saivāgamas have influenced the later tantras describing Mahāvidyā worship. These cannot be said to have been related to the Sākta tantras by any organic community of thought or descent. Thus, though different types of tantras are said to have spurn from different currents, they are yet both represented as issuing from the body of the God. Although Siva has been mostly represented as author of all Agamas, the aim of all Tantra Sāstra culminates in the worship of Devi because Jiva is thought of a manifestation of Devi's substance. If the Devi is vidyā what liberates, by her māyā she also binds. Although, Sivahood is to be attained by worship but it has to be offered not to Siva but to the source of all Vidyā and Avidyā i.e. Devi Mahāvidyā. The questions naturally arose in the minds of the student of Tantrā Sāstra as to why the Mahāvidyā Upāsanā was resorted to when there were wide methods of Upāsanā like Vedic sacrifices as

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[20] Saktanada Tarangini

[21] Bhutusuddhi Tantra, Ch. IV

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[22] Agatang Sambhuvaktrebhyah gatamgeha girija mukhe
Matancha Vasudevena tasmadagama uchyate
Nirgato girija vaktrat gatasca girisa srutin hastra
Matascha Vacsusevasya nigamah parikathyate.

Yoga systems. To this it may be well said that when the Vedic method was clearly a method of outer system and Upaṇishads only thought of the sublime and supreme in the forests and it was steeped with various difficulties to complete a particular method of worship, for that a particular auspicious time would be needed and also various upāchāras for the worship. Contrary to this, the Yoga system beginning from the Upaṇisadic age required a particular atmosphere where the worshipper should not be disturbed not only for a few hours but for days together. It is the tantra system that found out a via media between these two extreme systems and clearly spelt out a method of Upāsanā for the Sakti which is extant in all the aspects of nescient world although in a veiled form and to adopt a method that would be suitable both for the people of Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti mārgas i.e. the way of enjoyment and through it realization of God and the way of complete renunciation. It was nothing unusual to use of meat and fomental liquor in tantra puja as it was also prevalent during the Vedic age. This method of enjoyment and also worship was allowed to people so that this would no more prove as means of allurements against the hard course of realization of the supreme reality by sublimating all carnal desires and placing them in the ideal of the deity. The Vedāntic 'neti' system has its clear influence on this system of worship wherein the outer worship was adopted to be gradually forsaken i.e. a Pasu becoming a Vira and Vira attaining Divyavaba in worship. The exponents of tantra sāstra have well understood it and they have even found out a practical and ritualistic method of 'Gayatritattva' of the Vedas which was termed as Gayatritantra and all the expostulations and replies between Mahesi and Maheswar have therefore, been treated as Sāstras without beginning and are therefore, eternal though their phenomenal appearance may be successive to the Vedas. Letters or sounds are the essence of manifestation of words, the essence of which resides in the 'sphotā' or conception which existed from all eternity before even this sounds or words were uttered. Therefore, it is wise to hold the phenomenal appearance of the tantra post-dated in relation to other sāstras in the same sense as that in which the Kali Yuga is said to succeed the earlier ages of the present Maha Yuga. In this sense it can be told that the tantra has been existing in the Vedas as the perfume exists in the flower. There is obviously a great difference between Yoga undertaken for the extinction of all desires and such prayers to the deity for wealth and the destruction of foes. The 'Bhagavad-Gita' preaches Niskāmakarma which with the pursuit of the spiritual knowledge leads to the acquisition of such knowledge and thereafter to Nirvāṇ. As Niskāmakarma cannot be attributed to be an idea of Buddhism, which preaches similar extinction of desire the performance of work with desire described in the tantra sāstra are not Buddhistic in its teaching. In Lalitavistāra we find mention about Sakyasigha's knowledge of Nigama, Purāṇa, Itihās and the Vedas. Whenever both Veda and Nigama are mentioned in the same passage the latter refers to tantra which goes by the names of Agama and Nigama. This shows that tāntric practice antidated the Lalitavistāra. From the standpoint of Western Criticism although the tantras have been referred to be the products of a later age, the Buddhist sect and the biography of Buddha clearly shows the worship of Brahmā, Indra, Rudra, Visnu, Devi, Kārtikeya, Mother Kātyāyini, Ganapati and others. Had not the tāntric form of worship been then in existence this would not have been spoken of in these texts. The Buddha's objection to the Vedas was nothing but a voice raised against the system of outer worship which must have been very elaborate and widespread probably reaching a point of religious tyranny throughout the country. The legend of creation of Devi Peethas that after Saṭi's death Siva roamed here and there pining for her and Visnu intervened by cutting the Devi's dead body to pieces and throwing them at different places of the country where the Sākta Tantra Peethas were said to have been established. This legend clearly goes to show that these upāsanās in different established places meant for the Devi was even earlier to the Buddhism, and that is why Buddhism in its later decadence was forced to adopt a method conducive to a religious thinking of the prevalent age for its survival and nay, even developed the system to a full-fledged Yoga-Tāntric Cult. In order to point out the origination of tantra it would be sufficient to mention that readers of Chhāndogya, Talavakar and other Upaṇisads were aware of the incident in which Umā, the daughter of the Mountain riding a lion in a blaze of light appeared to Indra and other Devatās in order to prove that it was not by their Sakti that they live and move to that all which was done was so done by that Mahāsakti. The existence of Sarswatisukta in the Ṛk Veda, Laxmisukta in the Yajur Veda and Devisukta in the tenth mandala of Ṛk Veda shows the ancient Devi Upāsanā in the Vedic age which continued to come to the Purāṇic age as a visistāchār to Buddhist Iconoclasts. Mādhavāchārya, the commentator upon the Vedas has in dealing with the Pāttañjaliyogadarsana in his compilation of the six darsans quoted many passages from the tantra sāstra. Vāchaspati Misra, the commentator on Sarvadarsana recommended Dhyāna of Devatās prescribed in tantras. Sankarāchārya also in his Sāririkavāsya made mention of tāntric sadchakra. If a period of atleast a thousand years be considered to have elapsed between the date of original works and that all compilations made in the Tantrasār, we can safely refer the beginning of tantra worship to near about 300 A.D. In the Brahma Purāṇa it is said that people should enter into the Temple of Bhubaneswar in the garden of single mango tree (Ekāmra Vana) and there worship Mahādeva according to vaidic and tāntric rites. The Kurma Purāṇa also says that there are then in the world many sāstras antagonistic to Sruti and Smṛti. The ordinance of such sāstras are Tāmasic, Karāla, Vairab, Jāmal and similar other works following Vāmamārga. In the Rāmāyaṇa, there are also references to Bala and Atibala which are tāntric and the mode of acquiring which is given in the Tantrasār. Rāghava Bhatta and Raghunandan in the Nārad Pancharātra had mentioned the nature of tāntric worship for persons in impure conditions. In the Parasarvasya, there is a quotation said to have been originally made by Govinda Bhatt which says that mantras with *Om* should not be taught to Sudras. The system of Upanayana and Dikshyā though adopted by the higher castes of the society are mostly tāntric. The Padma Purāṇa refers to taking of Vaisnabi Dikshyā and Nārada Pancharātra refers to medication on six chakras, named Mulādhār Swādhisthān, Maṇipur, Anāhat, Bisuddha, Ajña, and Sahasrara. Sri Kṛshna was also said to have performed six chakra sādhana. Invoking gods by Bija-mantra is a very old practice and there are references to tantra sāstra in Yudhisthir's question to Visma in the Sānti Parva of the Mahābhārata. Of course, tantras gave competence (Adhikār) to people belonging to all castes and therefore, it is alone an all-embracing religion and this must have been accepted by the society influenced by Brāhmanic Dharma at a later period when the Brāhmanism waned its influence on the society. There is mention of Sakti in the Virāt Parva of Mahābhārata where Yudbisthir has prayed to Durga. So tantra worship was not unknown to the Mahābhārata age. It has been already discussed that the Pancharātra system was a tāntric puja. It is interesting to note that Madhavāchārya, a great exponent of Indian Philosophy writes at the end of every chapter of his commentary that he was a devotee of Sakti or 'action', a servant at the lotus feet of the three-eyed Deva and illuminator of the path of Upanisad. There are many Upanisads of Atharva Veda which also prescribe tāntric way of worship. Kulluka Bhatt in his commentary on the Manu Samhitā has mentioned that Sruti is of two kinds, vaidic and tāntric. From this it is evident that the tantra sāstra is nothing other than forming a part of the Vedas. The Manu Samhitā describes tantra as vidyā which is used in addition to the Vedas and the Upanisads. It also finds mention in the fourth Brāhmaṇa in the 2nd Varga of the Bṛhadāraṇyak Upanisad. The Kātyāyan Samhitā ordains worship of Ganesh, Gauri and other Devas and Devis. The Bṛhadhārita Samhitā contains full account of the tāntric form of initiation. Thus the Vedas, the Purāṇas and the Srutis contain references to the tantra sāstra which proves its great antiquity. There is a tāntric scripture named Saivāgama containing sutras which have been quoted as authorities by Kṛsnānanda in his Tantrasār. Its commentator was Abhinava Gupta, the great Pandit in the Durbar of Gonarda, King of Kashmir and Gonarda died the death of a hero in the great war of Mahābhārata. This goes to show the pre-Mahābhārata antiquity of the tantra. Prof. Masaharu Annezaki after citing the Rajtarangini as evidence of tāntric worship at the time of Asoka says that without a doubt the tantra began to develop even before Nāgārjuna i.e. 200 A.D. From this it can be well-imagined that both tāntric and Buddhist thoughts existed side by side for a long period in India and influenced one another.

According to Prof. Winternitz[23] Devi Māhātamya which contains glorification of goddess Durga was interpolated in Mārkaṇdeya Purāṇa. This great work known as Chandi or Sapṭasaṭi was alluded by Bāṇabhatta in his Harsacharita to have been recited in temples and as Bāṇa belongs to 625 A.D. there is no doubt that Mārkaṇdeya Purāṇa in its present form with Sapṭasaṭi interpolated or otherwise must have been composed by 7th Century A.D. It also occurs under the titles Candi, Chandimāhātmya, Durgāmāhātmya and Sapṭasaṭi and exists in innumerable manuscripts as an independeut work. A manuscript of Devimāhātmya dated 998 A.D. has been translated in excerpts into French by Burnouf (*Journal Asiatique* W. 1824 P. 24 pp) and completely into English by Wortham (IRAS, XIII, 1881, P. 355 pp). Bānas poem 'Chandi Saṭaka' and Bhabavuti's drama 'Mālatimādhav' presuppose the Devimāhātmya, so that this late interpolation into the Mārkaṇdeya Purāṇas, if at all it is so, must have existed already before 7th Century A.D. (Pargiter). And since this Devimāhātmya contains reference to 'Mahāvidyās' the Mahāvidyā upāsanā must have been prevalent at least by 7th Century in its present form which gets wide acclaim in Devi-Bhāgavat-Purāṇa, a Saivite work written by Vopadeva of 13th Century, who was a contemporary of Himādri of 1260-1309 A.D. According to some it was written in 10th Century A.D. i.e. later than Sankara (9th Century) and earlier than Jayadeva (12th Century)[24] and probably written by a Dravidian author and it was not a temple ceremonial but Smārta rite[25].

And it would be more apt to say that the thesis and anti-thesis of the Purāṇic and Buddhist Philosophy and Upāsanā was synthesized in tantra. The synthesis is clearly evident in Mahāvidyā Upāsanā. The Ṛsi Akshyovya, who has been described as the expounder of the tāntric mantras of different Mahāvidyās has sometimes been treated as the Buddhist Akshyovya, who was one of the different forms of the Dhyani Buddhas from whom a number of male and female gods were emanated having almost similar characteristics as would be found with the different Mahāvidyās. As Dr. Bhattacharya in his 'History of the Tantric Religion' has aptly described in the case of two goddesses emananting from Akshyovya, there are many interesting deities terrible as well as benign. Of this Janguli is worshipped as the goddess who cures snake-bite and even prevents it. She corresponds to the Hindu goddess Manasā or Bisahari. Parnasavari is the goddess who prevents the outbreak of epidemics. She is closely akin to the Hindu goddess Sitalā. In the sculpture she has been represented as trampling the Bighnesha under her feet sometimes symbolised by Ganesh. This form of trampling Hindu gods under the feet of the Buddhist deities cannot be said to have been adopted in the original Mahāvidyā worship wherein Maheswar has been shown trampled under the feet of Kāli and Tārā because the Tantra has its tattva for such representation unlike Buddhist icons. Another deity Basudhārā has been shown as the consort of Jambhāla, the Buddhist counterpart of the Hindu Kubera, the god of wealth. She corresponds to the Hindu conception of earth and corn mother. She is conceived of as a young girl of sixteen years exhibiting the Baradā Mudrā in the right hand and carrying the ears of corn in the left. Often she is regarded as an emanation of Ratnasambhava or in other words she may be called Ratnasambhavā and equated with the Kamalātmikā of Mahāvidyā, who is no other than Mahālaxmi i.e. goddess of wealth. The second set of goddesses emanating from Akshyovya consists of those belonging to the Tārā group. Foremost among these deities is Mahāchinā Tārā who is also known in Buddhist Tārā literature as Ugra Tārā and has also been accepted in the Hindu pantheon under the name of Tārā and is regarded as one of the ten Mahāvidyā goddesses. It is interesting to note that the dhyāna of Tārā as is found in Tantrasār of Kṛshnānanda is directly borrowed from the Sādhanamālā, which is a Buddhist text and the association of Akshyovya with Tārā is scrupulously maintained in the Mahāvidyā Upāsanā where Akshyovya has been regarded as the Ṛsi who expounded the mantra of Tārā. Ekajatā is also a form of Tārā which was propounded by Siddha Nāgārjuna by bringing it from Bhota Desh or Tibet. There are also other female emanations of Akshyovya, the most important of whom are Nairātmā and

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[23] History of Indian Literature, Vol. I, M.W., P. 531–534 pp. ; P. 540, Note 3

[24] C. V. Vaidya

[25] History of Indian Literature, M.W., Vol. I, p. 540 notes.

Prajñāpāramitā. Nairātmā is the consort of Heruka which means 'no soul' or in other words, 'Sunya' in which Boddhichitta merges on the attainment of Nirvāṇ. The purely abstract conception 'sunya' crystalized into that of the goddess 'Nairātmā' having the colour of the void sky in close embrace of the Bodhisattva who is said to remain in eternal bliss and happiness and this probably presupposes the Tārā form of the Mahāvidyā which is Shyāmā i.e. the colour of the sky and is naked meaning thereby that the quarters or Sunya are her dresses. Her union with her consort Heruka is closely similar to the Sākta adoption of Mahādeva sleeping on the ground and the Devi in pratyalidha pose standing on him. The pattachitras of Orissa show the Devi's standing on the sleeping Maheswar in a posture of reverse sexual cohabitation which may be compared with the Yuganaddha image of Heruka or Abalokiteswar with his consort. The pose of Nairātmā looks terrible with bare and protruding tongue and she carries a kartari in her right hand and kapāla in the left. Her form resembles that of Kāli or even Tārā. Similarly, Prajñāpāramitā is the embodiment of the scriptural knowledge and is conceived as a beautiful goddess sitting on a white lotus and carrying a red lotus in the right hand and a prajñāpāramitā manuscript in the left[26]. She has a very beautiful face and a pleasant expression. Often she was worshipped in the form of a book and having many forms—Sita, Pita and Kanak (white, yellow and golden). This form may be well compared with the form of Bhubaneswari of the Mahāvidyā pantheon who also confers wisdom and erudition on her devotees like prajñāpāramitā. From Vairochan another Dhyāni Buddha emanated the sun goddess Marichi who had several forms of which one is Dasabhujā Siṭā. These goddesses are mostly of white complexion, three-faced, three-eyed, youthful and decorated in ornaments, the right hand displaying double thunder, Baradā pose, lotus and arrow; and the left hand displaying a bow, noose, the abhaya pose and a water vessel. It would be interesting to find that the Mahāvidyā goddesses are having these poses and other such displays made in the hands of the Buddhist deities. Some of these goddesses like Vajrabārāhi may be equated with the Matṛka known as Vārāhi in the Hindu Purāṇas and Tantras. Of the various emanations of Amoghasiddhi, there are also goddesses mostly belonging to the Tārā group namely, Khadirabani Tārā, Mahāsri Tārā, Sadbhujā Tārā, Dhanadā Tārā and Siṭā Tārā. This Tārā name has also been applied to the goddess Jānguli, Porṇasavari, Mahāchinā Tārā and Ekajatā which we also find as names of the Mahāvidyā Tārā in the compilation of her one thousand names. The Khadirabaṇi Tārā is known as Shyāmā Tārā because of her green colour and her two hands showing the Baradā mudrā and Utpala. The two attendant deities of Khadirabani Tārā are Asokakanta Marichi and Ekajatā like two attendant deities of Chinnamastā drinking her own blood from her severed head. There are also other Tārās like Basya Tārā and Ārya Tārā who exactly look like Khadirabani Tārā with the exception that some of these forms shown sitting in Bhadrāsan with legs dangling like sitting of Bagalāmukhi of Mahāvidyā Pantheon. Dhanadā Tārā is a fourarmed variety and she rides an animal unlike the deities of Mahāvidyā Cult except Dhumabati who rides on a cart driven by a crow. However, these different forms of Tārā and various emanations from the Dhyāni Buddhas like Akshyovya, Vairochana, Amoghasiddhi etc. though presuppose the tāntric system existing in Buddha age but must have prompted a codification of tāntric goddess worship in ten different forms known as Mahāvidyā. Besides the following fundamental ten-stage (Ātmabhumi)[27] of Bodhitattva Doctrine appears to be similar in essence with Mahāvidyā tattvas : (1) The Joyful (Pramvedita) ; (2) The pure (Vimalā) ; (3) The Luminous (Pravākari) ; (4) The Radiant (arcismati) ; (5) The Hard to Conquer (Sadurjayā) ; (6) The Turned-Towards (abhimukhi) ; (7) The Far-Reaching (divangama) ; (8) The Immovable (achalā) ; (9) The Good Mind sādhumati) and (10) The Doctrine-cloud (dharma-megha). While discussing on different Mahāvidyā it will be shown as to how these 'dasabhumis' will appear in close similarity with Mantra-Mahāvidyās and their stages of consciousness. It should not, therefore, be thought that the Tārā Cult in Tibet and China has been adopted in

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[26] Indian Buddhist Iconography by B. Bhattacharya, 1958

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27. Note at p. 19 of Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric system, F.D. Lessing and A. Wayman.

Mahāvidyā worship as though tāntric cults were already aware of the different forms of Buddhist goddesses but they have adopted their own and it cannot be over-estimated that the Buddhist tāntric ritualism influenced tantra and vice-versa and so it is held that the Tantra Cult only synthesized the opposite ideas of different godhood obtaining in Purāṇas and Buddhist texts and synthesized them to a systematic cult of worship adopting both the outer form as well as the inner esoteric worship of the Devatās which were emanations of the mantra form.

Whatever may be the influence of Buddhism or Pāsupata Cult on tantra or vice-versa the forms of the Tantra Sāstra are quite different from those two sects. They are generally cast in the form of dialogues between Siva aud his Sakti who reappeared after latter's death at the Dakshya's sacrifies in their forms of Vairab and Vairabi. Siva is called Ādināth, the first guru but is also Sakti for He and the Devi are one and the same as described by Mahānirvāṇ tantra. The Devi is therefore, included within him in the cricle of gurus and in Nigama Sāstras she as a teacher has also expounded different forms of tantra worship[28].

It has been already said that Agama is so called because it proceeds from the mouth of Sambhu and goes to Girijā being approved by Vāsudeva, and Nigama is so described because it emanates from the mouth of Girijā to enter the ear of Girisa being approved by Vāsudeva. The tantras in the forms of question and answer deals with the topics of Sṛsti, Pralaya, Devārchan, Sādhana, Purascharana, Satkarma and Dhyāna. It also describes the supreme spirit, the creation and destruction of universe, the origin and worship of Devas, classification of beings, heavenly bodies, description of worlds and hells, of men and women, the chakras of the human body, the law and dharma of different ages and stages of life called āshramas, the sacraments, the consecration of image of Devatā, mantra, yantra, mudrā, all forms of spiritual training and worship whether external or mental including worship of the panchatattva, consecration of houses, tanks, wells, trees etc., description of holy shrines, purascharana, japa, brata, satkarma sādhana and all forms of cere-

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28. Principles of Tantra, J.W, p, 70

monial rites and magic, meditation and yoga, duties of Kings, law, medicine and science. In fact, the tantras were encyclopaedic knowledge of their time. There are innumerable tantra books most of which have not yet been published. Largely, these texts may be divided as saḍāgamas and asaḍāgamas (i.e. Good & Bad). According to Brahmānanḍa Giri, the author of the celebrated Sāktānandatarangini, sadāgama alone is āgama but though there is difference of opinion regarding inclusion of asaḍāgamas who in disregard to their Varnāshramadharma offers the flesh, blood and wine etc. to the Devatās, both these texts include tantra proper as the texts offer to all that freedom from Vedic exclusiveness the practical method which qualifies a Sādhaka for the higher doctrine of the path of knowledge. There is no ban for a Sudra and a woman who can adopt the tāntric method of Sādhana as has been mentioned in the Gautamiya tantra. It has been said elsewhere in the tantra that in the chakra there is no caste at all and even the lowest Chanḍāla be deemed as highest as the Brāhmans. The Mahānirvāṇ Tantra says that a lower Kaula who refused to initiate a Chanḍāla or a Yavan into a Kaula mantra considering him to be inferior or a woman out of disrespect for her, goes to hell. All two-footed beings in this world from the Bipra to the inferior caste are competent for Kulāchāra. The broad division of Sādhakas into Pasu, Vira and Dibya completely ignores the caste restrictions in tantra worship. The tantra answers the human need for ceremoniality in the sense of the necessity which one feels for the extreme truth manifestation of which has stimulated every being to have translated the inner feeling into some form of religion whether it conforms to the past without rites and ceremonies or with it and hence creating a social epoch simultaneously affecting or honouring the superiority of those who have preserved these ceremonies in civic life. It also answered that by the mere closing of the eyes in a meditational pose does not enable a man to realise the Absolute Brahma. The great teaching of the Vedānta by itself cannot achieve anything without accompanying Sādhana and the tantra claims to be practical in this respect because it is a 'pratyakshya sāstra' which affords direct proof of experience. The tantra system is fundamentally rational in this sense that without referring to a birth after death it explains the Brahma realisation as a culmination of the method adopted during this life (Jivanmukti) and also attaining a state free from all sensuous bondage and enjoying a state which is complete consciousness and inextollable bliss and this can be achieved by sacramental knowledge of mantra which is not irrelevant muttering of insensible syllables but sound powers profoundly based on this truth. However, as rituals the Tantras recognise that there is a stage in spiritual progress in which it becomes not merely unnecessary but an obstacle to further advance. If Sādhana be as it is but means to an end with the attainment of such end it becomes to that extent not only bad but superfluous. As the Mahānirvāṇ tantra says, Brahma Sādhana is the highest state of mind, dhyānabhāv is the middle stage and japa comes next. Thus, there is no doubt that the external worship is the lowest of all; but this equipose that has to be achieved for internal worship comes out of the external worship which establishes the union of the worshipper and the worshipped in a psychic plain. Even if a person who has realised this stage of bliss has neither to do any yoga nor pujā but the sāstra has ordained that this has to be done by him also for the learning and guidance of the ordinary folk as otherwise they would be blamed for not doing their duty of this world.[29]. This goes to show that ritual is necessary but it must be accompanied both by sincerity and increasing knowledge which leads to 'tattvajñāna', the supreme knowledge. The knowledge of which the tantra speaks is not metaphysical faculty with its acquisition of the mind on the ordinary plain of consciousness but is that spiritual experience, existence of which consitutes the fourth stage of Samādhi i.e., Turiya consciousness attained by successful yoga. Despite the proclamation of modern Monism, the world in its own way is as real as the Brahma whose 'lilā' it is and in order to bring the world's manifested reality to the altar of ultimate, worship, definition of which involves the dualistic idea, is conceived as all action dedicated to and informed of all spiritual purpose and intention. Although Sāstra says that such action and devotion is related to competency and to the Karma of previous birth, the tantra does not deprive anybody for that purpose nor declares this visible and palpable

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29. Srimad Bhagavadgita, Ch. III—22,25.

world as ignoble. It acknowledges the present capacity of every individual who can surmount all the obstacles that differentiates the ultimate from the individual and fetters the latter because, as the tantras believe the world as the wealth of the Sakti of Visveswari and therefore, every individual is also endowed with that eternal Sakti only to be revealed by the endeavour known as 'sādhana'. The tantra harmonises Vedāntic monism and apparent dualism of the world-plan in that the sādhaka by his own effort can change this duality into unity thereby proclaiming the glory of the grace of the 'Parama Siva' in His love embracc of matter (jada) and spirit (chaitanya)[30]. Therefore, the tantra describes the Sādhana of three kinds, physical, verbal and mental which must be accomplished by the body, sense and intellect quite according to present conditions of desa, kāla and pātra. Therefore, it has been said in the Tantra Sādhana that the fruit ripens on the tantra tree before even the blossoms appear on the Vaidic tree. The only importance that has been laid by the tantra sāstra is for its sādhana being initiated by a Guru whose importance in realisation of God is as great as the God Himself.

Be that as it may, why should the Sakti tāntrik method be adopted for realisation of godhood in man. The fetters or 'Pāsas' which flow in an eternal sway to waste outwardly mark the human Pasu as Kulārṇava Tantra emmerates at pity, ignorance, shame, family, custom and caste. This has to be directed inwards and upwards and transformed to power. This power sublimated cuts off all the aforesaid eight bonds and serves as a pointer to the play of macrocosm in the human microcosm in its plexuses as centres of this Sakti. So, whatever may be the acāras the Pasu is led stage by stage in its consciousness till it reaches the superconsciousness like Anuttar yoga of the Buddhist or Sakti Tāntirc Yoga system for which separate chapters need be devoted for a full and detailed discussion.

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[30] Mahanirvana Tantra, p. 178-181.

CHAPTER II

THE SAKTA-TANTRIC PRINCIPLES

Before entering into Tantra Sāstra proper regarding Mahāvidyā worship it would be useful to discuss about the cult of Sakti which is the essential of all Tantra Sāstra and the texts relating to such Saktism. According to popular belief Tantrism is the same as Saktism although it has special relevance to the cult of Buddhism, Vaisṇavism and Saivism. The Sākta religion mostly conforms to the tāntric ideas and practices a most notable feature of which is the idea of Supreme Being as a female Power worshipped under different names and forms. Although other religious systems evidently admit of the place for the goddess as a consort of the male god, the Sakti Cult treats the Devi or Sakti as supreme relegating the other gods to the background. She is termed as Ādyāsakti or primal energy and has created from her own body Brahmā, Visnu and Siva having divided her own self into parts creating a female form for each of these three Devas and allowing these three forms mating with these three gods resulting in the creation of this universe and issuing all living beings from such union. According to Dr. N.N. Bhattacharya the present form of the Sākta religion is essentially mediaeval in character whose roots may be traced through the primitive cult and rituals of the mother goddess. With the development of the idea of all-pervading female principle a need was felt to equate the local goddesses with the Supreme Being of the Sāstra and the 108 and 1,000 names of the supreme deity arose also out of such equation. In the 'Devi Bhāgabat' we find the Mula Prakṛti assuming different gradations of Ansurupini, Kalārupini and Kalānsurupiṇi i.e. manifesting herself in parts, smaller parts and further subdivision. So she was represented by Durgā, Laxmi, Saraswati, Sāvitri and Rādhā as Ansurupini; Ganga, Tulasi, Manasā Sasṭhi, Mangālachaṇḍikā and Kāli tn Kalārupini and different grāma devatās as Kalānsurupini. Thus, the Ādyāsakti that resides in Brahmā as the creative principle, in Visnu as the sustaining principle, in Siva as the destructive principle pervades all spaces and animates everything of this phenomenal world. She has been treated as the Queen without a second of the Kingdom of the Universe and Sāstra is the name of her universe-controlling and unfailing will. In order to understand the world play of this Brahmamayee, who is destroyer of ignorance and illusion having its two aspects, Māyā and Vidyā, like shade and light of the sun, the mercy of Mahāvidyā and her grace has to be evoked. This would result in dispelling the mass of dualistic darkness thick with illusion, covering the ultimate truth of Monistic aspect of the supreme. The development of this Saktism gradually engulfed the tāntric cult of Buddhism, in other words known as Bajrayanism, and reappeared as Tantrism also having in its background the Sānkhya concepts of Prakṛti, Buddhi, Aham, Tanmātra, Mahābhuta etc. The Purusa of the Sānkhya was transformed into Brahman of Vedānta with whom Siva was subsequently equated. Thus, the original characteristic of Prakṛti as Jaḍa was totally changed to Sakti in potential and therefore, interpreted as Vimarsa Sakti of Brahman and the Chaitanyamaya Purusa of Sānkhya was treated as 'Jaḍa' and 'Saba' in the form of Siva lying down under the feet of Prakṛti, the Sakti. The followers of Tāntric Srikula school believe in the 'Brahma Mimaṃsā' of Srikaṇṭha and Siva-Karmaṇidipika of Apeyadikshita. This school admits Sat and Chit manifestation of Siva and regards Sakti as the Vimarsini or Siva's natural vibrating power. But the Kālikula school of Tanṭrism holds that Sakti is same as Brahman in its three aspects, Sat, Chit and Āananda and not its Māyā-Vibarta or transformatory aspect. According to this school the theory of Sivasakti is beyond all dualism which can be understood only through experience which in its turn depends on the Tāntric mode of worship. According to the Sākta standpoint the ultimate reality is the Prakāsa aspect of the supreme being which is beyond time and space and of the nature of pure consciousness. What is known as the Vimarsa is independent of this Prakāsa in relation to action but in reality the Vimarsa Sakti is the self of Prakāsa standing in inseperable and completely identical relation. Sakti has two states—inactive and active. When it is in the inactive state, it is said that Vimarsa is emerged into Prakāsa. But when Sakti becomes active the supreme being becomes conscious of its knowledge then manifesting itself as Aham. The whole universe is reflected in this Aham like objects reflected in the mirror. The supreme being whose Prakāsa is Siva and Vimarsa is Sakti, is at the same time transcendent and immanent. With this supreme being Sakti or Kalā is associated in eternal bond. Kalā means absolute transcendental power. The first transformation of this Sakti is 'Ichha' or will; just as oil comes out of the oilseeds so also Sakti emerges from the supreme being at the beginning of creation. This appearance of Sakti is like the reappearance of memory of Kone arose from deep sleep, The sepreme being and Sakti are both of the nature of Chit or pure consciousness; but since Sakti acts on everything, it sometimes appears as knowledge and sometimes as action according to the nature of the things in which they appear. The dualistic Sākta school holds Vindu as material entity dependtng on the action of the Sakti. They differ from the Monistic Sāktas in that they considered Siva as undifferentiated from Sakti and both as two aspects of the same supreme being ultimately differentiated between Siva Sakti equilibrium on the one hand and Vindu or material entity on the other. According to these Sāktas Vindu is eternal like Siva and Sakti and in the case of creation, Siva is the efficient cause, Sakti the instrumental cause and Vindu the materiel cause. Because of its non-material nature, Sakti undergoes no transformation while it is on work but it does when it is in relation with Vindu or matter. The Sāktas, therefore, hold that the world was somehow either a transformation of Brahman or a transformation of Sakti although this is not a satisfactory explanation. Against this dualism arose the Vedāntic interpretation of Sankar. The problem was still stupendous to determine the relation between the sentient Brahman and the non-sentient material world. Although at a later stage the tantras synthesized these conflicting aspects by adopting a method of Prānapratisthā into the 'Jaḍa' image thereby feeling the existence of Chit behind every non-sentient being of the world or Prapancha. Philosophically this synthesis may not be acceptable. But it had a practical aspect which ultimately culminated in Mahāvidyā Upāsanā as a surest method of realising the ultimate truth which is one and the only one. The present form of Tantrism has emerged from these heterogenous set of ideas and practices as Laukika i.e. popular and the sophisticated. The Laukika tantra reflects the liberal attitude of the simpler people towards religion and society with a marked attitude of negation towards external formalities and doctrinal intricacies in regard to spiritual quest by the affirmation of belief and practices which are regarded as the heritage in the field of religion. In principle they accepted the Atimārgika system which does not believe in the codified norms of spiritual realisation and is therefore Vedabahya i,e. basing their doctrines on the anti-Vedic and un-Brāhmanical ideas. They were radicals and reformists in their methods of religion and were to some extent non-conformists like the Nāth sects though not Sunya Upāsakas like the Nāthas. On the other hand, the sophisticated tantras amalgamated the Brāhmnical, Buddhist Sākta and Pāsupat elements of religion and consistently attempted to interpret the teaching of tantra in terms of Smārtapurāṇic ideals. The negation of different worship was not admitted into the sophisticated tantra although it admits the system of Yoga of the Buddhist and Nath schools because the sophisticated tantras were well aware of the fate of Vajrayānis and their desideratum in the country and therefore, prescribed various norms for distinguishing all these systems so that society would be saved of the great degeneration that befell on the Vajrayānis and the Buddhist religion in general. It has very cleverly accepted the ideas and practices of the later Buddhists and made them respectable and flexible in character by adopting Brahmnieal handling to suit the society which was also facing the dangers of foreign invasions and consequently extinction of the religion of the masses. So the tantras accepted the division of the aspirants of ultimate truth into three categories known as Pasu, Vira and Dibya each representing a stage of sādhanā. Pasu denotes ordinary human beings having attainment of any kind in the sphere of religion even at times including adherants of Vedic rites. This ordinary individual by adopting various means of religious rites is transformed into a Vira. A Vira as has been described in the Kāmākshya Tantra is an inspiring personality fearless and resolute to achieve his end. He is polite in nature, bold, courageous of sharp intellect and active. He spends his time in the welfare of others and such Sādhakas of the Vira stage are eligible for initiation to Dakshināchār and Vāmāchār. When initiated to Dakshināchār an individual must follow the path of devotion and knowledge. He should live a healthy social and moral life but if he takes up Vāmāchār he has to be initiated in Sakti mantra and adopt Panchatattva as the method of Upāsanā to the deity. At this stage he need not regard the social injunctions as sacrosanet and is allowed to set himself free from all social fetters. Although most of the tantras advocate the Vāmāchāra worship there is restriction of adopting this method of tāntric worship for ordinary individual i.e. Pasu. Ultimately the matter has been left at the hands of a Kulaguru whose discretion as to whom initiation should be given and in what way was final. The last and the best aspirant was the Dibya who is initiated in Siddhāntāchāra and Kaulāchār[1]. In the Vira stage a man has some feelings of egoity but Dibya is a perfect man having soft heart within and strong personality outwardly. At times a Dibya may appear as simple as a child. According to Sākta-tāntric viewpoint no transformation of a man is possible without resorting to seven recognised religious methods. The Kulārṇav Tantra enumerates them as Vedic, Vaisnavic, Saivic, Dakshināchār, Vāmāchār, Siddhāntāchār and Kaula. The first three are intended for persons belonging to Pasu or ordinary category. The fourth and fifth are for persons who have reached the Vira state, the last two are for persons of the Dibya rank. The first is meant for men of pure body and mind, the second for devotion, the third for knowledge, the fourth for coordination of the first three, the fifth for non-attachment, the sixth for the realization of the non-attachment and the seventh for the liberation. The Paresvarkalpa enjoins that the first five of these methods require the aid of a preceptor or Guru while in the case of the last two the aspirant is free. These methods are also known as Ārambha, Taruna, Yauvana, Praudha, Praudhānta, Unmani and Anabasthā. The commentator on the Saundaryalahari of Sankarāchārya makes a three-fold classification of these methods known as Samayāchār, Misrāchār and Kaulāchār. The aspirant had to keep in his mind that the Preceptor is no other than

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[1] Introduction to Tantra Sastra- J.W.

God, if a male, is Śiva, and if female, is Sakti. Dikshyā means rebirth. They are of several kinds like ordinary kriyā dikshyā or the extraordinary variety of Bedhadikshyā. The aspirant has to believe in the identity of Guru, Mantra and the deity. Qualitatively dikshyā is of three types ; Sāmbhavi, Sakti and Māntri. Sāmbhavi dikshyā is not for ordinary persons. It is the initiation to Srividyā or Lalitā where the aspirant has to worship Devi Lalitā in Srichakra of Kāmeswari doctrine. The male principle or Vairab of Srividyā is known as Kāmeswar ; the initiator has to perform secret rites for the realisation of the Shāmarasya or equilibrium of Sivasakti within his own self. In the Sakti Dikshyā the preceptor infuses his own energy into the heart of his disciple. Māntri Dikshyā[2] is of general type according to which the aspirant has to install a ghata and erect a Māndapa, utter mantras and perform homa and recite Vija-mantra imparted to him by his teacher. The Māntri Dikshyā involves details of Bāhyapujā alongwith the Antarpuja[3]. In order to have Māntri Dikshyā, the aspirant has to understand the power of mantra which is two-fold, Vāchaka and Vāchya; the first revealing the nature of the second. Vāchya is what is to be known while Vāchaka is the method of knowing. Vāchaka entity of a mantra is composed of a sentence which is ultimately comprised of letters or sound forms. There are two grades of sounds, the more subtle being the Vindu and the most subtle as Nāda. The expression of sound is possible through letters and hence the letter is the Vija mantra; Ṛm, Kṛm, Sṛm, Hṛm etc. are Bijas which is like a Banyan tree remaining in a subtle form in the Banyan seed. The doctrine of mantra expounds that the Sakti remains in a subtle form in the letter conceived of as Bija or seed. The alphabates are therefore known as Mātrukā or Divine Mother. The fifty letters of the alphabates have been regarded as Mātrukā Varnas. They are equated with the rosary of Saraswati and the garland of skulls of Goddess Kāli. The expressed aspect of the Bindu and Nāda constituting sound is Bija. These three in conjunction constitute 'Sabdabrahma' which is consciousness inherent in matter. In tāntric

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2. Principles of Tantra—J.W. Vol.I

3. Principles of Tantra—J.W. Vol.II

language it is called the all pervading serpent power or serpent like 'Kāmakalā Bindu is the symbol of Śiva, Bija of Sakti and Nāda their union. This mystery of mantra is also equated with the principles of creation. Nāda is produced when Śiva assumes the form of Bindu while entering as Jyoti or prakāsa into Sakti existing in the form of Vimarsa. Bindu is conceived of as semen, the male seed and Nāda the female. Their union is Kāmakalā[4]. Thus, Bindu is the efficient cause of creation while Nāda and Kāmakalā are the material and the instrumental cause respectively.

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[4] Garland of Letters—J. W

CHAPTER III

THE TANTRA MAHAVIDYA

As has been already said, the body is the microcosm of the Universe, therefore Kāmakalā or sexual process is responsible for the creation of the world. Although theoretically Śiva and Sakti are inseparable like fire and its burning power still in the case of creation, they have a dual role. Śiva is the Male Principle of creation and Sakti the female Principle and their Kāmakalā or union is the process of creation of Śiva and Sakti, the former is passive and the latter active contrary to Prakṛti Purusa doctrine of Sānkhya where Purusa is active and Prakṛti jada. As without Vimaksa Prakāsh have no practical value, without Prakṛti Purusa is inactive ; so also Śiva is Śava without Sakti. Sakti having issued from its source, completes a cycle of creation preservation and destruction and then returns to its source again. The Tāntrics imitate this process through symbolical union with their female partners in pancha ma-kāra and chakra arādhanā. Sakti's return to its source is imitated by the rite of Satchakraveda. Sakti resides at the same time in the microcosm and macrocosm i.e. in Pinda as well as in Brahmāṇda, it remains latent on the serpent power in the Mulādhāra Chakra of the human body. This is to be awakened and sent to Sahasrora through different nerve plexuses situated within the body. This is how Sakti will meet its source. The imitation of this method by adopting a woman partner, though vehemently criticised in later times was itself a process of very high religious orders open to only Vāmochāri, Siddhāntāchāris and Kaulāchāris, who are alone entitled to Pancha 'ma'-kār worship. These three systems, though almost the same, the Kaulachara system is treated to be the best. The Vāmāchāris worship Kulastri which does not mean any housewife but a very beautiful woman specially choosen to function as Female Principle in whose worship the Pancha 'ma'-kār method is adopted wherein the use of 'Khapuspa' or menstrual blood is essential. All women symbolise Sakti but since their Virgin form is the most attractive one the great goddess is always pleased with the 'Virgin-worship'. The Kulārṇava states that wine and meat of Pancha 'ma'-kār are symbols of Sakti and Śiva respectively and their consumer is Bhairav. When Śiva, Sakti and Bhairav are united bliss is attained. The drinking of wine is the symbol of drinking the essence derived from the Śiva-Sakti, Sāmarasya (equilibrium) in the Sahasrār. Sexual union is the Symbol of the connection of Śiva and Sakti. This connection is described as follows :

महीम् मूलाधारे कमपि मणिपूरे हुतवहम्
स्थितं स्वाधिष्ठाने हृदि मरुद् माकाशमुपरि
मनोऽपि भ्रूमध्ये सकलमपि भित्वा कुलपथम्
सहस्रारि पद्मे सह रहसि पत्या विहरसे ।

The Goddess having pierced all the Kulapathas (ways of Kula) in the Mulādhār (earth), Manipura (water), Swadhisṭhān (fire), Anāhaṭa (air), Visuddhi (space) and Ajñā (mind) enjoys the company of her consort in the Sahasrāra. The Kaula is the best system although it is difficult to practice by ordinary Sādhaka. The Syāmā Rahasya states that a Kaula in order to hide his own self is a Sākta at heart, a Śiva outwardly, and a Vaisnab in the midst of an assembly. This Sādhanā is not restricted by time and space. A real kaula makes no difference between clay and sandalwood paste, son and enemy, cremation ground and home, gold and grass. He is as if a Brahmadarsi who has lost all sense of distinction.

Thus in Sakti-Tantras Vāmāchāra rites hold its sway. According to Tāntric texts there are seven āchāras (ways), Vedāchāra, Vaisnavāchāra Saivāchāra, Dakshināchāra, Vānāchāra, Siddhāntachāra and Kaulāchār. The 'Merutantra' describes five types of Vāmāchāra known as Sābara, Siddhānta, Chinā, Vāma and Kaulika. The Sakti-Sangama-Tantra states that this system was in vogue among the worshippers of Ganesh, Rudra, Visnu, Śiva, Svayambhu, Veda, Bhairav, Kshetrapala, Cinā, Kāpālika. Pasupati, Bauddha, Kerala, Vira-Vaisnab, Sambhav, Chandra and Aghora. The worshippers of Vāmāchāra worship the deity in Pancha 'ma'-kara was only at night as the day worship is not suitable for this rahasya Puja unlike Dakshināchāris. According to 'Sakti-Sangama-Tantra the Mahāvidyā Goddesses Kāli, Tārā, Sundari, Bhairavi, Chhinnamastā, Mātangi and Vagalā are fond of Vāmāchāra, while Kamalā, Bhubaneswari (Vala) and Dhumāvati are appeased by Dakshināchāra. This mention of 11 Goddesses in stead of ten though appear confounding it can be said that Tripurasundari and Vālā or Sodasi are one and the same Goddess for whom either Dakshināchāra or Vāmāchāra method of worship be adopted. Rudrayāmala enjoins a Vāmāchāra aspirant should keep a woman expert in sexual arts on his left side and a pot of wine on the right and should have a musical environment for his training under a Guru. This can be interpreted both ways i.e. gratification of sensual objects at the first instance so that there should be no more leaning for the baser materials and full concentration while meditating the deity. The prescription of Vāmāchāra worships for Varna other than Brahmins in some of the tāntric texts goes to show its period of degeneration as Mahākāla Saṃhita says that Vāmāchāra and Kaulāchāra are to be followed only by Sudrās (शुद्रादि यवनान्तानां सिद्धिवमिपथे स्थितां मेरुतन्त्र). When a Brahmin had to adopt this Vāmāchāra method he had to forsake his faith and heritage notwithstanding slander from his friends, separation from his family, apathy from people, punishment from the king. This shows that Vāmāchāris had no venerable status in society and Tantra came to disrepute because of this degenerating method of adopting Five 'M' for the worship of deity so that in Siddhāntachāra Kulāchāra is totally prohibited for the Brahmin.

Siddhāntāchāra is a form of Vāmāchāra in which the external rites of the Five 'M's are regarded as subsidiary, the more important ones being antaryāga or the rites of inner purification. According to Bhāskararāya there are three Schools in the Cult of Sri Vidyā viz, Samaya, Kaula and Misra. Tantra texts were, also divided for adoption by different castes. Mahāmāyā Sambara etc. belong exclusively to Sudras and were treated as Vedavāhyav. These were known as Samayamarga wherein Samaya is Lord Śiva, and Samayā Sakti, and their relation, perfect equilibrium. They lay emphasis on Sahasradalakamala and on antaryāga. They have nothing like Japa, Puraschanara and other external rites unlike the system of Mahāvidyā upāsanā. In Parasurāma Kalpasutra samaya is treated as the creed established by Kulasastras

(सामयिकाः समये कुलशास्त्रमर्यादायाः वर्त्तमानाः—Rameswar). Kulāchāra is the most important form of Vāmāchāra and Sakti Tantras define the term Kula as Sakti and Akula as Śiva (कुलम् शक्तिरिति प्रोक्तमकुलं शिव उच्यते). The realisation of their equilibrium is the aim of a Kula worshipper. Tantrāloka states 'अकुलस्यास्य देवस्य कुलप्रथनशालिनी.' Avinavagupta explains it that Kula is the penultimate state of Purṇa Samvit and it also means mulādhāra and Susumnā through which Kundalini rises to Sahasrār. Kundalini Sakti in Mulādhāra is called Kaulini or Kulayosit. When the Kundalini Sakti pierces the Chandramandala or lunar circle of the Sahasrār and unites with Śiva, the nectar which flows down and annoints the body of the Sādhaka is called Kulāmṛta. According to Rudrayāmala, Kaulāchāra is that form of the Tāntric Cult in which worship of Kulastri, Kulaguru and Kuladevi is essential. Sankarāchārya in Saundaryalahari states this system ever as Vedavāhya. Devi Bhāgavata condemns this as an uncouth way followed only by those who have no faith in the Vedas, agnihotras and pious deeds and belonging to the group of Pāsaṇda, Kāpālika and Jainas. In a subsequent period i. e. when Mahāvidyā worship was thought of and adopted Kaulāchāras obtained Vedic sanction. This is evident in Kaulārṇav Tantra where Śiva says—

वेदशास्त्रोक्तमार्गेण कुलपूजां कराति यः
तत् समिपस्थितां मां त्वां विद्धि नान्यत्र भाविनी।

There are two sects of Kaulas, viz., Purva and Uttara. The Purvakaulas believe in Śiva-Sakti equilibrium while the Uttara Kaulas insist solely on Sakti worship. It is this latter Kaulas who have paved the path for only Sakti worship. The Srichakra of Tantra. Sakti cult is a sublimation of the yoni worship of the Kaulas. The Saktisangamatantra describes the importance of woman in Kaulāchāra as under :

Woman is the mother of the three worlds, its representative and container. All the beauty the world contains is sustained by woman. There is no friend better than a woman, no way better than a woman, no luck better than a woman, no tapes better than a woman, no tirtha better than a woman , no yoga better than a woman and no japa better than a woman. And this woman is no other than our deity in Sakti tantra. In Nityotsava tantra a Kaula has been extolled like anything. This tantra mentions that three and half crores of tirthas and all the Gods are within the body of a Kaula. In the Mahāvidyā Upāsanā these Kaulas have retained their supremacy as ace Sādhakās.

According to Dr. N. N. Bhattacharya all the Sākta-tāntric deities are creation of the mind created according to the desire and mental inclination of the aspirant. These deities have no anthropomorphic background and no mythology. Although some of the Puranic deities have found mention in Tantra they have totally changed their characteristics. The Purānic stories of the exploits of the Kāli have nothing to do with the Tāntric concept of the Goddess. The Goddesses are not believed to have outer existence except in mantra and yantra form. But the only exception to this Tāntric idea is the case of the ten Mahāvidyā Goddesses who were brought in relation to this Dakshyayajña legend as a concession to the followers of the Purāṇas. The great Goddess Kāli or Mahāmāyā has innumerable forms some of which are distributed in different āmnāyas or regions. The better known are the Mahāvidyā Goddesses: Kāli, Tārā, Chhinnamastā, Sundari, Bagalā, Mātangi, Laksmi, (Syāmalā ?) Siddhavidyā-Bhairavi and Dhūmāvati (Saktisangama tantra, Tārākhanda). Sāktānandatarangini quotes another list as Kāli, Tārā, Māhādurgā, Tvaritā, Chhinnamastā, Vāgvādini, Annapurṇā, Prātyangirā, Kāmākshyāvasini Vālā, and, Sailavāsini, Mātangi. Sometimes thirteen or more often eighteen Mahāvidyā Goddesses are also mentioned. They are Kāli, Tārā, Chhinnā, Mātangi, Bhubaneswari, Annapurṇā, Nityā, Mahisā Mardini Durgā, Tvaritā, Tripurā, Puṭā, Bhairavi, Vagalā, Dhumāvati, Kamalā, Sarasvati, Jayadurgā and Tripurasundari (Niruttara Tantra, Patala XV). In the Nārada Pancharātra it is stated that there are seven crore Mahāvidyās and seven crore Upavidyās (सप्तकोटिर्महाविद्या उपविद्याश्च तादृशा-Prāṇatosini). Mahānirvāṇa tantra states that the great Goddess is of the nature of the infinite and it is only for the sake of her devotees that she connects herself with Prakṛti, characterised by three qualities, Sattva, Raja, and Tamas which is an integral part of her ownself and assumes the forms of the Mahāvidyās. The primal Vidyā is Kāli who is the bestower of direct liberation (शून्यगर्भंस्थिता काली कैवल्यपद्दायिनी). The Goddess Tārā is of Sattva quality and she is the bestower of knowledge. Sodasi, Bhubaneswari and Chhinnamastā are of Rajas quality and they bestow minor liberations like wealth, heaven etc. Dhumāvati, Vagalā, Mātangi and Kamalā are of Tamas quality. They are invoked especially in connection with Satkarma (māraṇa, Uchhātana etc.) and allied purposes.

Let us have a primary discussion about these Mahāvidyā Goddesses. Kāli is the abstraction of primal energy. Saktisangama tantra states that according to Hādimata Mahāsakti is called Kāli in Kerala. Tripurā in Kashmir, and Tārā in Gouda. According to Kāḍimātā she is called Tripurā in Kerala, Tāriṇi in Kashmir and Kāli in Gauda. Kāla or time devours the world during its dissolution. She even devours Kāla and that is why she is called Kāli and is conceived of as the primal cause of creation and destruction (Mahānirvāṇa). According to Nirvāṇatantra she is Brahman representing existence and consciousness and conceived of as with or without attributes. This tantra says that all the Gods have their origin and dissolution in Kāli. The Vijamantra of Kāli is Kṛm, letters *K. R. I. M* being suggestive of Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokshya respectively. Todala tantra and Purascharyārṇava interpretes *K* as the creative aspect of the Goddess, *R* the destructive, *I* the sustaining and *M* the equilibrium of Śiva-Sakti. In principle Kāli is one and there can be nothing apart from her. But, according to the capability and desire of the worshipper she may be conceived of in innumerable forms like Dakshinā, Siddhā, Guhyā, Sri, Bhadrā, Cāmuṇdā, Savāsanā, and Mahākāli. The Mahākāla Saṃhitā gives nine names—Dakshinā, Bhadrā, Smasāna Kāli, Guhyā, Kāmakalā, Dhanā, Siddhi and Chandıkā. The Jayadratha yāmala mentions Kālikā, Dambarā, Raksā, Indivara, Dhanadā, Ramaṇi, Isāna. Jiva, Virya, Prajñā and Saptarṇā. The Sākti Sangama tantra mentions Hansa and Vsikanāna form of the Kāli. Of these forms Dakshinākāli or Syāmā is the most important. In her dhyāna as quoted in the Tantrasāra she is described as having a terrible appearance, a fierce face; having four hands, untied hair, and a garland of severed heads around the neck. In her lower and upper left hands she holds a freshly severed head and a sword, and in the lower and upper right hands she exhibits Abhaya and Varadā pose. Naked, dark as dense cloud in complexion, her body is streamed with blood which oozes from the garland of severed heads she wears. Two corpses serve as her earrings. Terrible in face and teeth, she has well-developed breasts probably to demonstrate her uncommon beauty, her girdle is made of hands cut off from the bodies of corpses. Her face is smiling but it is stained with blood falling from both corners of her mouth. She screams terribly. She lives at the cremation ground. She has three eyes resembling the orb of the rising sun. Her untied hair hang to the right. She stands on the chest of Śiva lying as a corpse. She is engaged in Viparita rati or Purusāyita with Mahākāla (Niruttara Tantra) Smasānakāli or Śiva resembles Dakshinākāli engaged in Viparita rati with Mahākāla. Tantrasāra describes this deity with a sacred thread of snake, surrounded by Jackals and Yoginis and intoxicated due to heavy drinking. Syāmārahasya and Prāṇatosiṇi also describes this deity in greater detail. Siddha Kāli is also a form of Dakshinākāli. She is three-eyed and has also dishevelled hair. She drinks Amṛta from a skull in her left hand. She wears a girdle and a jewelled crown. Her complexion is the colour of deep blue lotus. She has a flaming tongue. The Sun and Moon are her earrings. She stands in ālidha posture (Kāli tantra). Guhyakāli is of the colour of clouds. Tantrasāra describes this deity with black garments, a rolling tongue, terribly looking teeth, sunken eyes, smiling face, necklaces made of serpents and a crescent on the head. She frequently licks a corpse. Her sacred thread is a snake and she has the thousand-headed Ananta on her head. Śiva stands as a child to her left. According to Mahākāla Saṃhitā Guhyakāli has ten faces. At times this goddess has been described as having 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 20, 30, 36, 60, 80 and 100 faces. Bhadrakāli has been described in Tantrasāra as a hungry goddess ready to devour everything. Her eyes are sunken, face black as ink, hair dishevelled, and teeth blue-black like the jambu fruit. She holds a terrible and flame-like noose in both hands. She is three-eyed and four-armed. Her hands hold a Kapala, parasu, damaru and Trisūla. Yoginitantra holds Bhadrakāli to be Mahisamardiṇi. Tantrasāra describes Mahākāli known as Mahāraudri and Kātyāyani having five faces, each containing three eyes and in her left hands she holds a spear and trident, a bow and arrow, as sword and shield and exhibits Vara and Abhaya poses. Merutantra confirms to this description. She is also having ten-faced form (Purascharyārṇava). Raksākāli is variously depicted as of white complexion, three faces, six arms, nine eyes and matted locks of hair. Her garment is red. She is generally invoked as a protectress from calamities. Chamuṇḍākāli is described in the Tantrasāra as having a pleasant face but a terrible appearance with fearful teeth. She has a Khatvānga and a sword in her two right hands and a noose and a human head in the two right hands. She wears a tiger skin like Tārā and sits on a corpse. She is described to live in dense darkness.

Tārā, the Buddhist Tāntric Goddess has been equated with Kāli. Saktisangamatantra equates Kāli, Tārā, Tripurāsundari and Chhinnamastā as one and the same. Tantrasāra's description of the Goddess confirms to its Buddhist character which shows it as a youthful, fierce, shortstatured and big-bellied goddess. She stands in Pratyālidha pose and wears a garland of skulls, has a lolling tongue. In her right arms she holds a sword and a knife and a skull and a lotus in the left. As a Mahāvidyā goddess her head has not been adorned by the Dhyāni Buddha Aksobhya as found in its Buddhist form (Nilatantra). Purascharyārṇva describes her as Tāriṇi. According to Matsyasukta as quoted in Tantrasāra, the cult or Tārā is not only conducive to liberation but it also bestows knowledge, poetic ability, wealth, success in business and position in the royal court. Of the different forms of Tārā, Ekajatā is worthwhile mentioning. Her matted locks are considered to be formed out of Rudra himself (Tārā Rahasya). Tantrasāra describes Ugratārā, another variety of the goddess as standing in Pratyālidha pose with her right foot on a corpse. She holds a sword, blue lotus, knife and vessel in her hands. She is short statured with brown matted locks and fierce snakes on her body. She destroys the activities of the whole world having put it in a skull-cup. The third form of Tārā is known as Nilasaraswati. This goddess is said to have originated in a lake called Chola to the west of mount Meru. While She was performing austerities her energy fell into the lake had caused her complexion to become blue. Asta Tārā forms are also conceived like Buddhist Astamahābhaya Tārā. They are known as Tārā, Ugra Vajrā, Mahogrā, Kāli, Saraswati, Kāmeswari and Bhadrakāli.

Sodasi is a goddess of the Mahāvidyā category who is also known as Srividyā-tripurā or Tripurāsundari. This goddess is a tāntric abstraction like Trikona, Trisakti (Icchā, jñāna, kṛyā), Trivnidu (Rakta, Sukla, Mishra), Tripitha (Kāmarūpa, purṇagiri and Jālandhara) Trilinga (Vāṇa, Itara, Para), as per descriptions in Kāmakalābilāsa. This goddess is also known as Lalitā in whose favour dhyānas of one thousand names (Lalitā Sahasranāma) and three hundred names (Lalitā Trisati). Yogini-hrudaya describes her as a very beautiful and youthful goddess she is installed on a red lotus her garment being also red. Mahākāla Samhitā also prescribed for her dhyāna. Her nature is very benign.

Bhuvanesi or Bhuvaneswari is conceived of as the Goddess who protects the world. She duzzles like the rising sun having the moon on her crest. Purascharyārṇava describes her as a goddess of three eyes, highly developed breasts and a smiling face. She holds a goad and a noose in two hands showing Varadā and Avaya poses with the other two.

Bhairavi is the goddess who saves her worshipper from all types of sorrows. According to Parasurāma-kalpasutra her name is formed by the etters 'bha' symbolising bharaṇa or maintenance, 'ra' symbolising Ramaṇa or sport like creation and 'Va' Vaman or release. Thus this goddess represents the Sakti of creation, maintenance and release or dissolution unlike three different god heads Brahmā, Vishṇu and Maheswara having only one power, either creation or maintenance or release. She has many forms like Tripurabhairavi who resembles a thousand rising suns, her eyes resembling red lotus and her bejewelled crown the lusture of a crescent moon. Her garment is red, she has a garland of heads round her neck, her breasts are covered with blood. She holds a rosary and manuscript in two hands showing Varadā and avaya poses in other two as has been described in Fetkāriṇi Tantra. The Chaitanya Bhairavi holds a noose, a goad, and also a skull in her left hand. Bhubaneswari Bhairavi is benign, clad in red garments, and decked with a variety of ornaments. She is having three eyes, highly developed breasts, two hands holding a noose and a goad of the other two showing Varadā and avaya postures. Sampatpradā Bhairavi is a youthful goddess having an erotic figure ; she shows Varadā and abhaya poses and carries a rosary and a manuscript in her hands. Satkuṭa Bhairavi takes the hue of a rising sun, her necklaces are of severed human heads, her breasts are developed and look like golden jars. She holds in her four hands noose, goad, manuscript and rosary. Rudrabhairavi wears a garland of severed heads from which blood oozes. She used 'Śiva' as her throne and holds in her ten hands the trident, kettle drum, sword, shield, bow, arrow, noose, goad, manuscript and rosary. Annapurṇā bhairavi also known as Nityā is the distributor of food. She has Bhumi and Sri beside her. She wears a crescent on her head—a crown sparkling with the lustre of nine kinds of gems and wasteband, as per descriptions in the Tantrasāra.

Chhinnamastā or Prachaṇḍachaṇḍikā is like a Kalpabruksa and can fulfil any want of an aspirant. The Tantra-Sāra describes her numerous dhyānas. In fact this goddess is imagined as a half open white lotus on the navel with the red orb of the Sun in its pericarp. This orb is identified with the yoni triangle. The Goddess Chhinnamastā is contemplated in this way holding her own severed head in her left hand and drinking the blood flowing from her severed throat with her dreadful tongue. Her hair is dishevelled, she holds a skull vessel in the left hand and a knife in the right. Fierce and naked, she stands in Pratyālidha pose on Rati and Kāma who are engaged in inverted sexual intercourse. She looks like a girl of sixteen having highly developed breasts. Dākini stands to her left and Varṇini to her right, both of them drinking the blood which flows from her severed throat. Dākini is full of effulgence having matted locks, three eyes, white teeth developed breast, dishevelled hair, skull vessel in her left hand and knife in the right. Varṇini is of red complexion and has not of the emblems of the former. Chhinnamastā is just like Buddhist Vajrayogini.

The goddess Dhumāvati is capable of destroying enemies (धूमावतीमनुः प्रोक्तः शत्रुनिग्रहकारकः). She is described as Vibarṇā, Chanchalā and Rustā. She is rough, her robes are unclean and hair untied. She appears like a widow having only a few teeth. Her charriot has a crow banner and a crow drags it. She is tall and has hanging breast, harsh looking eyes and big nose. She holds a winnowing fan in one hand and shows Varadā pose in the other which is trembling. She appears hungry and thirsty, terrifying and quarrelsome as has been described in Fetkāriṇi-Tantra. The Nārada Pancharātra equates Vagalāmukhi with Dhumāvati, but Dhumāvati appears like an old widow while Vagalāmukhi is youthful and has a golden complexion. She is also not querulous and insatiable like Dhumāvati but appears grave and drunk. According to Tantra-Sāra Vagalā has three eyes and four hands. She sits, in Andhaparyankāsana on a corpse and holds a club, a noose and a thunderbolt, and an enemy's tongue. She is clad in yellow clothes and has developed breast as has been described in Purascharyārṇava. She is also called Vishṇu Vanitā which gives her a clean character of a Vaishṇavi.

Mātangi is three-eyed, dark-complexioned and seated on a bejewelled throne. On her four hands she holds a sword, shield, noose and goad. Her head is adorned by the moon. Various forms of Mātangi are known such as Ucchista-mātangi, Rāja-mātangi, Sumukhi-mātangi, Vasya-mātangi, and Karṇa-mātangi. Ucchista-mātangi, also known as Ucchista-chandālini is conceived of as wearing black robes. Her feet are graced with red slip or wash. She has developed breasts, garlands of pearls and corals around her neck and ear-rings made of conch. Sumukhi-mātangi, sits on a corpse. She has red robes and ornaments and is a youthful maiden of sixteen with highly developed breasts. Her left hand holds a skull and the right hand a chopper. The Bedhā-Kāli image at Puri Jagannāth Temple closely resembles this description. Rāja-mātangi is conceived of as residing within a triangle inside the pericarp of a lotus. She has a smiling face which is bright because of mild perspiration. The region below her navel is marked by trivali under which is shown the public hair. She is clad in beautiful robes and decked with ornaments of pearls. She is two-armed and fickle-eyed owing to her drunken condition. She is a maiden of sixteen with big, round, firm breasts. Suka and Sāri are her companions. She seems to be the embodiment of the sixty-four arts.

The Goddess Kamalā, also known as Lakshmi and Sri, has the complexion of gold. She is bathed by four white elephants which hold golden jars of nectar in their upraised trunks. She herself holds two lotuses in her two upper hands and shows Varadā and abhaya poses with her two lower hands. She is seated or standing on a lotus. She wears a crown sparkling with gems and silken clothes as described in Sāradātilakam. One of her forms is Mahālakshmi who is a very youthful goddess, bedecked with all sorts of ornaments and select flowers and clad in the best of robes. Her physical features and figure are perfect ; they radiate the highest degree of eroticism. Sāmrājya-lakshmi is also a form of Kamalā. Her complexion is like that of the ātasi flower. She is adorned with ornaments made of pearls. She has eight hands holding a conch, wheet, club, lotus, bow and arrow and showing Varadā and avaya poses. Each of these goddesses has a Bhairava of her own, the Bhairava Kāli is Mahākāla of Tripurāsundari Lalitesvara, of Tārā-Aksobhya, of Chhinnamastā Vikarāla, of Bhubaneswari Mahādeva, of Dhūmābati Kālabhairava, of Kamalā Nārāyana of Bhairavi Vatuka, of Mātangi Sadāsiva and of Vagalā, Mṛtyunjayā. Of course there is no uniformity in the Tantras regarding the names of the Bhairavas and their relation to the Goddesses. At times they are related to Vaishnaba Gods like Vishṇu, Achyuta etc. and at other times with Śiva, Sambhu Maheswar, Dakhināmurti etc. In this way it is made clear that the Sakti-Tāntric religion brought the Vaishnabite and Saivite gods to its fold, thereby synthesizing different religious cults into a unified cult of Saktiupāsanā.

The Yuganaddha principle of non-duality as obtaining in Buddhist Tantras also influenced the Sakti Tāntric idols which have been found expression in various Sakti icons. The idols were conceived from the idea of 'bhoga' of the male partner with the devout and sensual female help-mate, the Yaksha and Yakshini of the Jainas, the Bhairava and Yogini of the Vajrayāni Buddhas. The initiating woman plays the part of Sakti while the male initiate assumes the part of Śiva and both attain together a realisation of the immanence within themselves of the consubstantiality of the Goddess and the God[5]. This idea has been criticised by N. N.

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[5] H. Zimmer

Bhattacharya who associates Temple icons of erotic nature with Kāmasāstra, But the icons of 64 yoginis and conception of 64 sexual postures illustrated by Vatsyāyana must be having a common origin and that is, the conception of Sakti worship by 'Maithuna tattva'. At best this may be thought of a symbolical representation of an event which a sādhaka thought that he could secure the acutal occurrence of that event thereby pledging the goddess in Yuganaddha position. This explains the inconsistency of sexual and erotic reproduction of Yuganaddha ideas in the form of art in temples. The temple art having a 'garva' inside which the God in the form of the Chief idol is placed symbolically represents the Sakti upāsanā in the form of Maithuna ultimately conceiving in the realision of the God inside the womb. This sexual design pertains to West Asian temples which are devided into three parts, i.e. the porch representing the lower end of the Vagina upto the hymen, the hall or the Vagina itself on the inner sanctum or the uterus. Although we may not agree with Dr. Bhattacharya's view that the sexual depiction in the outer temple revealing the lusts of the aristocratic class the fact remains that the temple upāsanā was symbolic representation of the Tāntric Maithuna Upāsanā. The earliest depictions of 'Maithuna' associated with Sri, the Goddess of abundance is found in the 2nd Century BC monuments of Sānchi and Bhārhut and also in Bodhagayā. Although the earliest depiction belong to the Buddhist period this became very popular and found a varied expression in the arts of Gāndhāra, Mathurā, Western Decan and the Andhra region. These portrayals of couples in varieties including kissing, embracing, pre-coital activities are available at Mathurā, Nāgārjuṇa Kondā and even in a number of temples in Orissa where the chief idol is Śiva, Devi or even Vishṇu or Surya. The temples constructed between 400 AD to 13th century AD also have in their walls numerous specimens depicting sexual activities which may be associated with the Tāntric rituals. These motifs at times depict the various Kāmasāstriya poses of actual Maithuna. According to Dr. Bhattacharya from 900 AD onwards there is really an out-brust of erotic expression-bold, frank, and gross with countless varieties of copulative acrobatics on the exteriors and interiors of religious building. These are abundantly found in the temples of Puri and Konark and in the

Khajurāho art groups. There is dispute regarding the opinion that these exhibitions of eroticism in temple walls are sexoyogic as has been discussed by Mulakaraj Ananda in Kāmakalā, A. Danielon in 'Approach to Hindu erotic sculpture' and K. Lal, in the 'Cult of Desire'. Although some of these authors opine these sex techniques as those belonging to Hathayoga this has been objected to by Dr. Bhattacharya. According to him these tāntric glimpses do not prove an obvious link between the erotic depiction on temples and tantrism. If there be any clue in tāntric-art, it should be functionally related to upāsanā and sādhanā to attain the bliss of non-duality. But Dr. Bhattacharya has not clarified as to what those art may be. His objection that the original Saktapithas are not associated with any sexual display because of its esoteric nature does not appear to be conclusive. Because the Yuganaddha positions are directly related to Panchamakār Upāsanā in the Tāntric Birasādhanā. And before this Sākta Upāsanā there was already the Sākta-Pasupata Upāsanā in the form of the phallus placed on a yoni known as Śivalinga. So there could not have been any social reaction to erotic displays on the temple walls when these were conceived as part of the Upāsanā Tantra.

But the Upāsanā of Mahāvidyā Goddesses shows a clear diversion from such ugly depiction in worship of images. The popular enaye of Dakhinākāli is worshipped with a full image standing on Śiva. Even the original image of these deities do not show their naked form. In iconographic descriptions the Kāli stands on the chest of Śiva lying as a corpse. Kāli is having four hands in two of which she holds a skull and a sword and the other two exhibit Varadā and abhaya poses. She has dishevelled hair and a lolling tongue pressed by her teeth. Although in some of the images Śiva is depicted to lie on the ground with his penis erected and the goddess is seated naked on him having taken his penis into her sex organ, this is not a common feature. The Chola and Pallava art have also some bearing on the tāntric conception of Chhinnamastā. Tāntric Mahālakshmi is represented in an eighteen-armed image at Jājpur in the front facade of the Trilochana Temple. A twenty armed Mahālakshmi image of 10th Century is found in Simila in Rājasāhi District. The Tāntric goddess Ekānansā which is often equated with Kāmalātmikā of the Mahāvidyā pantheon is worshipped as the principal deity in the Ananta Vāsudeva Temple of Bhubaneswar with Krishṇa and Balaram on either side of her. A sculpture at Bikrampur in West Bengal shows the figure of a four-armed goddess which may stand for Mahāmāyā or Tripurāvairavi. A Chandi image from Dalbazar in Dacca is often identified with tāntric Bhubaneswari. A six-armed goddess also identified with Bhubaneswari is found at Shekati in Jessore District. Similar four armed Bhubaneswari icon is found at Puri in Jagannāth Temple. Other images like Sarvāṇi, Sarvamangalā and Aparājitā of tāntric cult belonging to the Palasena period are found in different parts of Bengal. In Māldah museum a sadāksari Mahāvidyā image is also found. In Dacca museum two stone images of Avalokiteswara and to its left an image of Tārā is also found. In sculptural representation Avalokiteswara is often flanked by goddess Tārā. Of course we cannot accept this Tārā to be of Mahāvidyā Pantheon. The depiction of Vajrayogini found in Sāranātha museum appears to be a stone image of Chhinnamastā. A Patna museum image shows the deity standing in alidha posture holding Kartri, Kapāla and Khatvānga. The image of jamvāla with pot-bellied from available at Ratnagiri. Ayodhaya and Prachi Valley of Orissa pre-supposes Kamalātmikā form having corn in one of the hands sitting in lalitāsana form with feet rested on a lotus or on a Kalasa.

It is interesting to find the Trailokyavijaya images in Nālandā having four arms and trampling on prostrait figure of Śiva. Collection in Patna museum shows the God trampling upon in the head of Śiva with his left leg and the body of Gouri with his right. The Vanpur bronze image also shows trampled Śiva in eight hands and Gouri with four hands lying flat in her back and the God's foot presses down in the bosom. The main figure is in pratyā-lidha pose. Although these images are of Buddhist character but they presuppose the Mahāvidyā images where the Devi is found trampling Śiva under her feet in Pratyālidha pose. From Ratnagiri in Orissa the images of Āropya Tārā in ardhaparyankāsana and Astamahābhaya Tārā are found. Most of the images of Tārā goddess are found seated on a lotus, right hand exhibiting Varadā pose and left hand holding a steam of lotus. The Elora specimen shows abhaya pose of this goddess. Bronze images of Shyāmā-tārā group are found in Patna museum. The eleven Tārā images in bronze all in lalitāsana carrying Utpal in the left hand and exhibiting Varadā pose in the right are found at Banpur. An 8th Century standing bronze image of Dhanadā Tārā exhibiting abhaya pose rosary, lotus stalk and Manuscript is found in Nālandā museum. A bronze image of Bajratārā shown within an 8 petalled lotus with the figures of 8 attendants carved on the inside of the petals is found in Dacca museum. Although these representations are mostly Buddhist in character they must have presumed the Sakti-Tāntric images of the Mahāvidyās.

Most of these Mahāvidyā goddess are mentioned in the Sritattvanidhi with their iconographic features. Kāli, the ādyā Mahāvidyā has been described in the Kāli tantra as the goddess of four hands in two hands she has a sword, and a head, the other two hands showing abhaya and Varadā vidyā. Her terrific features with dreadful teeth have been described in the Devi purāṇa and Bhavisyapurāṇa describes her body as black as cloud, although her face is copper red, her hands holding a head and a cornika flower. Put according to Sritattvanidhi the iconographic features of this deity has been described as having eight hands showing therein a conch, a disc, a mace, a pot, a pestle, an elephant goad, a noose and a thunder bolt. Her colour resembles that of a cloud. Her posture shows her in a state of eternal bliss playing in the bosom of Śiva. This also conforms to her descriptions in the Yoginihrudaya. The second in the pantheon of Mahāvidyā i.e. Tārā who is the source of light also represents the Sower of hunger as has been shown in Yogini hrudaya. The Devi Sahasranāma explains her name as one who leads to the other shore (Tarati anayā sā Tārā). The Bhagavati Tantra shows her as a hungry goddess. According to Jaina iconography she is described as seated on a lotus, holding in her four hands a citrus, two lotuses and a rosary. (दॅवी च धारणीनाम नीलांगी कमलासना, मातुलिंगोत्पलधरा दक्षिणोर्भयवाहुका) With this form she is mentioned as Dhāriṇiyaksiṇi in the Jaina scriptures. The Digambara Jainas have conceived her as a Goddess riding on a swan and holding a snake, a bajra, a mruga in the three of her hands. The fourth hand is in Varadā posture. The Sādhanamāla describes a number of Tārās imaneting from Amoghasiddhi. But Sritattvanidhi describes only one Tārā from known as Ugra-Tārā. She has been described as of short-stature and dressed in tiger skin. She wears a garland of skulls, her tongue is portruded, she is having three eyes. According to Prāṇatosiṇi she is described as Ugratārā because she is an Ugra goddess and also protects her devotees from all fierceness. She is of Sindura colour. She sits in pratyālidha pose and holds a sword, a spear and as Kharpara. In the remaining hand she shows the Varadā gesture (उग्राय तारिणी यस्मात् उग्रतारा प्रकीर्त्तिता).

But Sritattvanidhi does not describe Chhinnamastā icon. Instead Sodasi has been mentioned as the third Mahāvidyā who has been identified with Tripurā-sundari. She is described as having four arms holding a noose, an elephant goad, an arrow, and a bow as per Sodasi Tantra. But Sritattvanidhi describes this goddess having four hands and of Vermillion colour. She holds a noose, a goad, an iksudanda, bow and flower-arrow like the purāṇic Kāmadevirati. The iconographic features identifies her with Rājrājeswari standing in the orbit of Sun (bhānumaṇdala madhyastha). The 'Sāradā Tilakam' describes her as a goddess of Rakta-barṇā and bright like a thousand Sun. She has four hands holding a book, a rosary and two hands showing Varadā and abhaya postures. This goddess is also known as Bālasundari or Kulasundari. Sritattvanidhi describes her icon as of red colour like that of the rising Sun having adorned her head with crescent diadem. She has three eyes and a smiling face. In her hands adorns the same thing as shown in 'Sāradā Tilakam'. The fourth goddess Bhuvaneswari is conceived as the deity of the spheres, her colour is red like that of the rising Sun. She has crescent on e crown and adorns herself with Kundala, hāra, graiveyaka kānchi, maṇi, valaya etc. She sits on the lotus throne and has three eyes. Her two hands showing the abhaya and the Varadā gestures and the remaining two holding noose and a goad. But the Bhubaneswari Tantra depicts the goddess in the same way as in the Sritattvanidhi. The author of 'South-Indian images of Gods and Goddesses' describes Bhubaneswari as the deity having a serpent on her head coiled round a linga stuck into a yoni and in her four hands holding a cup, a mace, a shield, and the Sriphala. Her colour is like the molten gold. The 'Sāradā Tilakam' describes two other forms of Bhubaneswari namely Souvāgya Bhubaneswari and Māyā Bhubaneswari. The former is of the vermilion colour and has three eyes and round breasts. Her person is adorned with various jewels, her hands showing a cup and a red lotus. Māyā Bhubaneswari is of blue colour, having a crescent in her head, she has got three eyes and four hands, she holds a cup, a lotus, showing abhaya pose in another hand. Nothing has been said about the fourth hand. Chhinnamastā a popular Tāntric goddess is described below as in Chhinnamastā Tantra. Her left foot in Pratyalidha pose she holds her severed head and a knife. Naked she drinks voluptuously the stream of the bloodnectar flowing from her beheaded body. She has three eyes with a serpent on her forehead with jewels. Her breasts are adorned with lotuses. Inclined towards bust she sits erect above the God of love who shows shines of lustfulness. She looks like a red rose, but her eyes are blue. As has been discussed earlier this deity may be compared with Vajrayogini, the stream of blood issuing from her severed body is falling into the mouth of the severed head and into the mouths of the yogini called Vajrabairochani and Vajrabarṇini on either side of her.

Bhairavi is the sixth deity of the Mahāvidyā pantheon. She is fearful having the power of death and is engaged in perpetual destruction. She is also called Tripurābhairavi the fearful goddess of the Treelokas, viz., swarga, martya and pātāla. The Sritattvanidhi describes the iconography of Tripurābhairavi on the basis of 'Sāradā Tilakam.' The Tripurābhairavi tantra describes this deity with a slight difference from Sritattvanidhi as under :

उद्यतभानु सहस्र कान्तिमरुणं क्षौमां शिरोमालिकां
रक्तालिप्त प्रयोधरां जपवटो द्विधाम भीतिं वरम्
हस्ताब्जैर्दधतीं त्रिनेत्रविलसत् वत्क्ररविन्द शियं
देवीं वद्य हिमांशुवद्यमुकुटा वन्दे समन्दस्मिताम् ।

Sritattvanidhi depicts Tripurābhairavi sitting on the lotus throne shining with a crimson glow incomparable as of thousand Vālasuryas. She wears a silken veil and garland of skulls, blood streams her breasts. She has lotus-like face with three voluptuous eyes and a crescent over her head. The hands show gestures of victory, of wisdom Varadā and abhaya poses. The colour of the deity is described red. Samvit Tripurā is a peaceful goddess having three eyes of white colour. She holds a book, a rosary, a pot full of ambrosia and the remaining hand in the Vyākhyāna pose.

The seventh of the list of Mahāvidyā is Dhumavati, the Goddess of poverty and misfortune. It is contemplated that the world goes into smoke at the time of ultimate destruction and Dhumavati signifies that idea. Her visage can be seen in the destitute, the beggars,the lepers, the diseased. She dwells in the wounds of the earth, in desert, in ruined houses tatters, hunger, thirst, widowhood, quarrels, the mourning of children. Her icons have been conceived in Bhāratiya Pratika Vidyā. The Dhumavati tantra describes her as a female goddess of unhealthy complexion, restless, wicked, tall, with a dirty robe and dishevelled hair. Her gaped mouth bereft of teeth gives her a widow look, ferocious holding in her hand a winnowing basket. Her eyes appear cruel, hands strembling, nose too long. She behaves deceitfully. She is shy in her appearance and inspires fear and instigate quarrels. She is treated as Kālarātri. The Sritattvanidhi describes her to be surrounded by a band of pisāchas and of red complexion, wearing red garments. Her teeth are protruded and fearful. She wears the kundalas in her ears and mundamālā as garland. Laughs loudly having held a three-eyed goddess with a vālasashi on her head.

Now we come to Bagalā, the eighth goddess in the Mahāvidyā pantheon. Sritattvanidhi describes her of yellow complexion, three-eyed and four-handed. In her hands there is trident, a pānapātra, a mace and the tongue of the enemy. She has the most fearful and at same time beautiful features with red lips, swelling breasts, and swanlike neck. She sits on a lotus throne. According to 'Bagalāmukhi Tantra' she has only two hands, the left holding the tongue of the enemy and the right torturing him by a mace. It also describes her clad in yellow robes.

The nineth goddess of Mahāvidyā pantheon is Mātangi, who is the goddess of royalty and domination. She is conceived of as the goddess who established peace, calm and prosperity after defeating the demon of disorderliness. The 'Mātangitantra' describes her of dark complexion with a white crescent in her garland. Her three eyes are lotus like. She sits resplendent with a jewelled throne. In her four hands she holds a noose, a sword, a shield and a goad. But Sritattvanidhi does not confirm this description. It describes the goddess as Rājamātangi of black complexion sitting upon a ratnaparyanka her one leg dangles down and placed on a lotus the other being on the throne itself. In one hand She holds a Vinā and in the other a mālā. There is a crescent moon on her head. She is shown listening the talks of a parrot which is at her side. Her garments are of red colour and her forehead is adorned with tilaka.

The 10th and the last Mahāvidyā is Kamalātmikā, in otherwords the goddess who is Kamalā or Lakshmi at heart. In the Kamalātantra she is described as of golden complexion bathed in the streams of Amabrosia flowing from golden vessels held by the trunks of four white elephants. Her hands grant boons and allay fears that is Varadā and abhaya poses, and in two other hands she holds two lotuses. She has a brilliant diadem over her head. Her hips like ripe fruits are loosely draped in a silken garment. The Sritattvanidhi describes her in eight different forms namely Lakshmi, Gajalakshmi, Mahālakshmi, SRI, Viralakshmi, two armed Viralakshmi, eight armed Viralakshmi and Prasannalakshmi. The goddess Lakshmi while represented with Vishṇu is shown only with two hands holding thel otus flowers. She is Hemavarṇā. In Vishnudharmattora purāṇa, she is represented with four hands holding a lotus with a longstalk, a pot full of ambrosia, a vilva fruit and a conch. Sritattvanidhi describes Gajalakshmi as a deity in white garments and having four hands. She sits in the padmāsana pose on an eight petal lotus which itself is on a singhāsana. In one of the right hands she holds a long lotus stalk, and in the left an amrutaghata. In the remaining two hands she holds a vilva fruit and a conch. Two elephants standing beside her are emptying the vessels held in their trunk over the heads of the goddess. She is also adorned with a beautiful lotus on her head. The Mahālakshmi has been described as a goddess of golden colour having four hands, the lower right hand holds a vessel and the upper right hand holds a mace, called Kaumodaki. The upper left hand shows khetaka and the lower holds Sriphala. There is also an emblem of linga over her head. The Srilakshmi is of golden complexion. She is described as the universal mother dealed with various ornaments and a mukuta. She holds in her two upper hands two lotus flowers and other two showing boon conferring and fear allaying. The pancharātra worshippers mostly adore Viralakshmi, who sits on lotus throne being Suvarṇavarṇā. Her two hands show Varadā and abhaya poses, the other two hands holding lotuses. Some of the Viralakshmi forms are eight-handed showing a noose, a goad a rosary, a mace, a lotus, a pot, the other two hands showing Varadā and abhaya poses. Sritattvanidhi also describes the Prasannalakshmi forms who is considered as the primodial energy, the mother of all beings occupying the left of Vishṇu. She is also conceived as Annapurṇā a two-handed goddess with red complexion and red eyes. Her breasts are high and face is round like a fullmoon. In her left hand she carries a vessel set with rubies and containing in it honey. In the right hand she has a spoon set with rubies containing delicious rice, i.e. payas. The images of Sridevi is found in Indian Art since 2nd century BC. It appears that even long before the Mahāvidyā Upāsanā this goddess has been continuing its popularity right from the vedic age, and was therefore included in one of the ten aspects of the Mahāvidyā.

CHAPTER IV

IS TANTRIC MAHAVIDYA UPASANA A POWER CRAZE

The Tantras have been condemned as a form of black magic, full of obscene and repulsive elements unfit for a man of gentle disposition to deal with it, what to speak of reading and learning it. It may not be unwarranted to state in this connection that doctrine and practices alleged to be specifically tāntric have their counterparts in the Vedas. For instance, the use of flesh or wine etc. supposed to be peculiarly tāntric rituals was also widely prevalent in the vedic age. The Mahāvārata, the Hari Vansa, the Kālikā Purāṇa, the Mārkandeya and Kurma purāṇas referred to the consumption of wine, fish and flesh. In Aitareya Āraṇyaka and in the Vamadevyam Vrata of the Samaveda and also in Brahma Vaibarta-purāṇa numerous references have been made to Maithuna, i. e. coition one of the principal methods of the Panchamakāra Upāsanā. The Atharvaveda largely contains different methods of magic spells and incantations to heal wounds and diseases, to extinguish fire and ward off epidemics and droughts. Herein the Gods Vasus and Adityas have been invoked as under[1] :

'O all ye Gods, ye Vasus, protect this man; likewise ye Adityas, watch ye over him ; him let not one related (Sanābhi) nor one unrelated him let not any deadly weapon of men reach. Similarly in Book VI[2] there is a magic call for relief from insanity in the following words.

'Free thou this man for me ; O Agni, who here bound, well-restrained, cries loudly ; henceforth shall be make for thee a portion, who he shall be uncrazed'. 'Similarly Indra and Agni have been evoked for gaining several things at a time as under :

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1. Book 1,30. The Atharvaveda Samhita, Harvard Oriental Series vol.7 P.30
2. Book VI- III. The Atharvaveda Samhita, Harvard Oriental Series Vol.7 P.36

[3]They either who by meditation led the beginning of speech, or who by mind spoke righteous things they, increasing with the third incantation, perceived with the fourth the name of the milch cow.

Similar praises have been made on behalf of Brihaspati with the following mantras[4], 'Go thou forth from what is excellent to what is better ; be Brihaspati thy forerunner. Then do thou make this man, on the width of this earth, remote from foes, with all his heroes.' Even there are incantations for success with dice :

'As the thunder bolt always strikes the tree irresistibly, so may I today smite the gamblers irresistibly with the dice.'[5] All these exhibit the peculiarity of human behaviour through ages and man's effort to somehow acquire power over the facts and his surroundings so as to have a large follower and self-satisfaction, though not entirely vicarious. But the worship of Sakti in Mahāvidyā Upāsanā has not only embellished this idea but the methods of Upāsanā have enriched the Sādhaka's power of influence on the people around him. It is not important whether the sixteen ways of Upāsanā or the use of five M's could bring this suprapower. It is rather worthwhile to recognise the use of particular syllables or seed mantras to invoke the goddess worshipped to bestow a particular benefit on the worshipper. This is amply illustrated in the Dasamahāvidyā Upāsanā. Before proceeding to incantations proper the tantra Sādhaka has to attract the attention of the Devatā with wholehearted faith and devotion. It should be his deep conviction that the image of the 'Devi' before him is all consciousness and in order to have this conviction he has to place different limbs of the goddess worshipped on different parts of his own body. He should be merged in meditation by gradually concentrating his mind on all parts of his Istadevatā's body and by repeatedly fixing his attention on the deity's person from the sole of her foot to her face. The principle behind such concentration or dhyāna is to reveal the mystery of the problem as to how in course of worship of the corporeal the incorporeal is to be realised. It may appear that such an imagination of incorporeal in the corporeal is sheer foolishness. In view of the fact that a blind faith

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3. Ibid P 388.
4. Ibid P 394.
5. Ibid P 420.

may condition one's mind for a few days, it cannot be held that it might·have any lasting effect whether Pshychological, philosophical or spiritual. And it may lead to a conclusion that there is separate farseeing God, the creater who rules the universe from heaven. But the tāntric view is to worship God by becoming a God (Devo bhuttva Devum Yajet). According to this view the body of the Sādhaka is a mini-universe which is the abode of the Istadevatā i.e. the goal to be sought. In other words Tantra has been able to satisfy the normal human craze for power be it for wordly gains or for paving the path for liberations i.e. either for Bhukti or Mukti. The Kāli Tantra describes that by reciting the Kāli Kabacha all the best in the three worlds can be brought under subjugation by a spell (त्रैलोक्याकर्षणं व्रह्मन् कवचं मन्मुखोदितम्).

त्रैलोक्यं मोहयेत् क्रोधात् त्रैलोक्यं चूर्णयेत् क्षणात्
पुत्रवान् धनवान् श्रीमान् नाना विद्योनिधि भवेत्।

त्रैलोक्यं क्षोभयेत्येवा कवचस्य प्रसादतः
महाकवि र्भवेन् मासं सर्वसिद्धीश्वरो भवेत्।

Similarly the Kālistotram shows that there are different mantras by which diseases may be cured, common people made to follow you, an enemy be killed ; there is also mantra to agitate the minds of an enemy, a common man made servile to your desire, a woman enticed. Even the world could be enchanted by use of these mantras and so on and so forth. In Tārātantra several mantras have also been stated to save the self, to kill the enemy or to bring him unto your control, to embelish your riches, to win a war or a game of dice, to enjoy women of your choice, to bring down the pride of your adversary, in a duct of learning and discourses and even to cause death to your enemy. There are large number of mantras to bestow kingship and to endow the worshipper with poetic faculty. All the other tantras under the Dasamahāvidyā Upāsanā have several such lines invoking the deity to bestow mysterious powers because the Sādhaka believes in the following lines as quoted from Tārakabacham[6] :

भुक्तिमुक्तिकरं साक्षात् कल्पवृक्षस्वरुपकम्

In Atharbanarahasya the Sādhaka has begged for riches and power simultaneously from the deity.

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6. V.S.T.
7. Visvasara Tantra—'यद् इहाश्ति तद् अन्यत्र, यन्नेहास्ति न तत् क्वचित्'

विज्ञानवृद्धिं हृदये कुरुश्री सौभाग्यवृद्धिं कुरुमे गृहे श्रीः
दसासुवृद्धिं कुरुतां मयि श्रीः सुवर्णवृद्धिं कुरुमे गृहे श्रीः ।

Thus the Tantra Sāstra particularly the Dasamahāvidyā elucidates in a very clear and bold terms the natural craze for power and riches.

Then it has to be seen if the Tantra Sāstra has illustrated methods for achieving this power so as to emphasize the power craze or dealing with it casually as a side issue. Now before delving deep into the matter it must be understood as to what 'power' means. Although the word has got a wider connotation, Sanskrit language in the highest causal sense it is 'God as mother' and in another sense it is the universe which issues from her womb. Therefore the Yoginihrudaya Tantra speaks thus—'Obeisance be to Her who is pure Satchitananda as power who exists in the form of time and space and all that is included in it who is the radiant illuminatrix in all beings. Now-a-days Western Science has already established energy as the ultimate of all limited manifestations in Nāma and Rupa, i.e. mind and matter. According to Eastern View this is the Almighty Infinite Supreme Power. All that is contained in this Infinite Being is brought out into a plenitude of manifestation by the consciousness power innate in Herself for the sheer delight of her becoming. This consciousness is power, the 'citsakti' which pours out the potentiality held in the infinitude of Brahman and throws up forms from out of the formless depths of the eternal. The Tantras call it a play of this power of the divine in manifestations and all these Nāmarupa in the form of universe are self-deployings of this Ādyāsakti brought into being, maintained and withdrawn in the process of Her cosmic play with the eternal being of Lord Parama Śiva, the Saktimān. All that is manifest is power (Sakti) as mind, life and matter. Power presupposes power holder because there is no powerholder without power and no power without powerholder. The Tantras name this power-holder as Śiva and power as Sakti, the great mother of the Universe.

This is also true in case of the human body or microcosm (pinda) which is nothing but consciousness in its kinetic aspect of Sakti embodied as Jivātmā and is a replicā of the macrocosm, the Universe (Brahmanda). As has been already discussed, the Viswasara

Tantra mentions what is here is elsewhere and what is not here is no where[7].

In otherwords this Sakti is there in some form in the body. And the Tantra speaks that it is Kundalini, the 'coiled-one' asleep in the base-centre Mulādhāra. And so long there is no effort to arouse it, man lives in this mundane world as an ordinary being. If Kundalini is gradually raised and allowed to pass through different centres known as Chakras and reach the lotus in the cerebrum that is Sahasrāra, the micro-body assumes a higher power transforming the human consciousness and uniting it with the Supreme consciousness. This is known as Yoga or Samādhi or in otherwords the 'Śivasthānam' or the abode of Bliss. When this Kundalini Sakti arises heat is felt at every Chakra and when it leaves a particular plexus the part so left becomes cold and lifeless. The progress upwards may be externally verified by others in this way. When the Sakti reaches the upper brain the whole body becomes cold and corpse-like except the top of the skull where some warmth is felt, this being the place where the static and kinetic aspects, unite. As a result the consciousness of Nāma and Rupa dissolve into that from which they originate. And this return or dissolution process is just an inverse of the process of creation from that original Sakti. The upward march of Kundalini from centre to centre endows the Sādhaka a long life, freedom from desire and sin, control of the senses, knowledge, power of speech and fame. Some of these and other qualities also issue out of concentration on more than one Chakra. As has been said in Satchakra nirupana that contemplation on the Nāvipadma gains for the Yogi power to destroy and create the world. But these varying degrees of attainment although endows a man with supersensuous powers, blocks further progress towards mukti or liberation. Because such a being falls vicitim to the illusions of the psychic world stopped on the way leading to Samādhi. Therefore it is quite obvious that the occult or magical powers or other psychic powers, through come in the way of Sādhana, but are not final attainments. In otherwords they only enlarge the capacity and attainments of the experiences in its subtle form providing an extention of natural faculty. There is nothing supernatural about it. It is simply a power above the normal. They hardly reach full consciousness i.e. Infinite 'Śiva-Sakti bliss' in and with which all universes are born. They are also maintained a while by the Sakti as Vaisnavi at every movement of which the molecular activity of creation goes on by the Brahmāṇi Sakti. This creation and maintenance also accomplish at every moment a molecular death loosening of the forms by Rudrāni Sakti. That is why Tantra Sāstra proclaims that creation did not take place only at some past time nor is dissolution only in the future but at every moment of time there is both. As it is now and before us here, so it was in the beginning[8]. So in this sense there is a continuity of the world and it is therefore real. Though the mind and life are subject to sense experience the ecstasy brought out by Tantra Sādhana dissolves the mind and body including the distinction between rationality and irrationality uniting the consciousness of Jiva with the Supreme which transcends all reasoning. The description of Kāli in Kālitantra, the Ādimahāvidyā, dark as a thunder cloud standing and moving on the white inert body of Śiva speaks these two-fold aspects of the reality, the static aspect of consciousness i.e., Śiva and the Kinetic aspect of consciousness i. e., Sakti. Śiva is white as Prakāsa Sakti and also inert because consciousness is pure without action and at rest. The Kāli Kinetic Sakti aspect is active and she is dark because She dissolves everything to nothing which can be described as darkness or vacuity of existence. She is creatr x, five corpses like Śiva form the support of her throne set in the wish-granting groves of the maṇidvipa, the golden sands of which are laved by the still waters of the ocean of Nectar which is immortality. But until there is infact change, Sakti is merely the potency of becoming in being and as such is wholly one with it; the power and the possessor of power are one, both are therefore Satchidānanda.

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[7] Sakti and Sakta—Sir J.W. P.24.

Now the question lies as to how to acquire this power. Like other Sāstras of Indian tradition Tantras have illucidated various methods known as Sādhana. Sādhana is that which brings Siddhi or realisation as a result of such action and may be material and or spiritual. The material advancement so obtained is known as Bhukti and the spiritual advancement is known as Mukti in the Tantra Sāstra. It consists of putting the body and the psychic into a rigorous training and the methods employed are numerous and elaborate like exterior or mental worship, Tapa, Japa including recitation of mantra, stuti and meditation. Then different methods are adopted according to the various ends sought by the Sādhaka but for every spiritual advancement external control over the senses, internal control over Chitta, Buddhi and Ahamkāra, Viveka or discrimination, renunciation etc. will be absolutely necessary.

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[8] Sakti and Sakta—Sir J.W. P.24.

In Dasamahāvidyā Sādhana it is mostly found worship with different articles, nyāsas or placing different deities on the body of the worshipper, invocation of the Devi and offering her all the sixteen type of Upachāra, Naivedya, etc. The Devi may be worshipped in full pratima form or in the form of a Yantra. For that, restoration of the Yantra and Mantra has to be made as in Kāli Tantra Yantroddhara is made by reciting the following verse :

आदौ त्रिकोणमालिख्य त्रिकोणन्तद्वहि लिखेत्
ततो बै विलिखेन्मन्त्री त्रिकोणत्रयमुत्तमम् । १ ।

ततस्त्रिवृत्तमालिख्य लिखेदष्.दलं ततः
वृत्तं विलिख्यविधिवल्लिखेद् भूपुरमेककम् । २ ।

The Yantra is a pictorical or geometrical representation of the deity. In this case first three triangles have to be drawn which should then be circumscribed by three circles and the outer circle adorned with an eight petalled lotus which should then be circumscribed by another circle which ultimately be surrounded by a four-door-square known as 'bhupura'. Yantras may be simply drawn by using various coloured ashes or by metals. As usual life has to be infused in the Yantra by reciting mantras, i. e. by Mantroddhāra. In Tārātantra the mantroddhāra is described as under :

वागवीजं प्रथमं प्रोच्य ऊँकारं तु ततः पठेत्
लज्जोवीजं ततस्तारावीजं हूं फत् ततः पठेत् ।

That is Vākbija is 'Aim', then 'Om' kāra, to which lajjābija 'Hrim' is to be added alongwith Tārābija 'krim' (like that of Kālibija) and lastly 'Hum phat' to be pronounced as under :

'Aim Om hrim Krim hum phat.'

Now the question will arise as to why Mantra has to be recited and what is its contribution to achieve power. According to Tantratattva the centre of power Kundalini is both Jyotirmayee and Mantramayee. And Mantra is used in the process of rousing her. Mantra has so much of importance in the Tantra Sāstra that its other name is 'Mantra Sāstra'. Mantra may be in the form of long lines of prayer or short formula for worship as in the Vedas or inarticulate syllables as the Bija mantra of the Mahāvidyā deities quoted above. So the subject-matter in this case is confined to the use of Bijamantras for arousing a deity in the Dasamahāvidyā-Pantheon. Tantra believes that mantra has got powers which lends itself a most efficacious method for those who craze for power. A man may be injured or killed by mantra as in Mārana and other Satkarma. It may appear quite fantastic as to how some inarticulate sounds could enable the sound maker or the mantra-karta to be bestowed with a power of doing good or harm to others. But mantra brings a kind of union with the physical Sakti. Even by mantra sakti a guru can transfer his power to his disciples as was done by Sri Ramkrishna to Vivekananda. Mantra used in the homa sacrifices could also save a man as happens in reciting the Mahāmrutyunjaya mantra. Thus mantra is a sakti in the form of sound. And a large number of such mantras have been used in Dasamahāvidyā worship. The Kabacha mantras are recited to protect different limbs of the worshipper from evil-doers at the time of worship as under :

ऊँ प्रणव मे शिरः पातु व्रह्मरूपा महेश्वरी
हूंकारः पातु ललाटे वीजरूपा महेश्वरी
स्त्रींकारः पातु वदने लज्जारूपा महेश्वरो
हूँकारः पातु हृदये भवानी शक्ति रूप धृक् ।

It is therefore a deep conviction in the minds of the Tāntrics that thought and words like mind are saktis, and as real as outer material objects. Thought and mind are projections of the creative thought of the world-thinker. The root 'man' which means 'to think', entitles man as mānab i.e., 'one who thinks' and is superior to other created beings. Mantra is expressed in the form of sound and according to Sākta-tāntric doctrine Sabda which is a guṇa of ākāsa (ether) and is sensed by hearing is either Varṇātmaka of dhvanyātmaka. Although modern scientists think creation of dhvani by striking two things, according to Eastern thinkers sabda is anāhata, that means not caused by striking things with each other. In other words Sabda takes the form of dhvani only in outer world but prior to that it also passes several stages inside the human body. So the mantras which are lettered-sound were originally unlettered-dhvani inside human body independent of any utterance. Although the outer sabda is produced in air by coming in contact with the voice-organs it was already audible inside the plexus which are seats of Kundalini at the time of Yoga. In this way the dhvanitattva or mantratattva may be connected with the 'satchakra', by concentrating on which man becomes superman.

Just as the body is causal, subtle and gross, so is sabda, of which there are four steps called Parā, Pasyānti, Madhyamā and Baikhāri. Parā sound is that which exists prior to the differentiation of the Mahābindu i. e., Supreme consciousness before actual manifestation. This Parā sound is motionless causal sabda in Kundalini in the Mulādhāra centre of the body. That aspect of it which begins to move with a sāmānya Spaṇda is Pasyānti, which is placed from the Mulādhāra to Manipura chakras. It is here associated with 'mana' and in a spiritual sense represents the motionless and first moving Isvara aspect of Sabda. Madhyamā sound is associated with Buddhi. It is Hiranyagarvā Sabda extending from the seat of pasyānti to the heart. Madhyamā sound represents the cognitive aspect of mental movement and here sabda assumes Artha in a subtle way even before utterance. When man is able to concentrate on the heart lotus he is therefore able to do thought-reading for which language stands no bar. In creation madhyamā sabda first appeared and at that moment there was no outer Artha ; then the cosmic mind projected this inner madhyamā Artha into the world of sensual experience and named it in spoken speech called Baikhāri Sabda. The latter is uttered-speech developed in the throat issuing from the mouth. This is otherwise called Birāta sabda or gross lettered-sound. The māntric sabdas or sound though belonging to gross body in their subtle sense are parā, pasyānti and madhyamā sabdas alternately connected with the prāṇa which is the vital force of life. Thus it appears that by mantrochāraṇa the inner thought movement is produced in a reverse way ultimately leading to the supreme speech though first general movement towards particular ideation. Thus in this mantra sakti there is hidden causal and subtle speech accompaning mind movement ultimately reaching the Sabda Brahma of which mantra is the manifested aspect. Mantra or a Uttered speech is a manifestation of the inner thought. This thought movement is similar in men of all races. For this reason when a thought reader's cerebral centre is enrapport with that of another, a man can read the hidden speech or thought of another even if he does not understand latter's language. Thus for each particular man speaking in each particular language the utternance of any object is the gross expression of his inner thought movements. It evokes that movement and again expresses it. It evokes the idea and the idea is consciousness as mental operation. That operation can be so intensified as to be itself creative. This is 'mantra chaitanya'. The Varnas or letters whose subtle form is mantra chaitanya are manifested as mantra and have been distributed in the satchakras as petals of the lotuses, the totals of which correspond to Sanskrit alphabets. Thus according to 'Satchakra nirupana' the four letters of the mulādhāra are व, श, ष, ल. Similarly in Ājñāchakra the letters ह and क्ष are the two petals of the lotus. Mulādhāra is the common source of uchchārana sthāna and the letters on the petals are bijas or seed mantras of all activities connected with the tattva of the centre. This is also the place of pruthvitattva and the recitation of these bijamantras with arapt attention on the mulādhāra chakra will bring all earthly or material success. Thus mantra is a power that enables the Sādhaka uttering it to attain supernatural powers. In this way all mantras can be awakened and 'mantra-chaitanya' arrived at. When the mantra is fully practiced it enlivens the Samskāra and the Artha appears to the mind. Thus the Jiva's Samskāra is completely allayed and he is elevated to a higher consciousness where Sabda and Artha in the form of Nāma and Rupa are merged together and the formlessness is achieved, because Sabda-brahma projects itself for the purpose of creation into two sets of opposing movements ; firstly the Sabda which passing through the vocal organs becomes dhvani and secondly artha movement in the form of all things constituting the contents of mind and the objective world. These two are emanations from the same conscious activity Sakti which is the word (Vāk) and are in consequence essentially the same.

It is in this sense the universe is said to be composed of the fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabets which are denoted by the garland of severed human heads worn by Mahākāli, the Ādimahāvidyā. The Varṇas are shown as severed heads because the Mahāvidyā at the time of Mahāpralaya withdraws all speech and its objects into Herself. This Sabda-brahma assumes the form of Kundalini in all creatures as has been described in Sāradā Tilak[9]. Kundali as Mahāmātrukā Sundari has fifty one coils. The mātrukās are nothing but subtle forms of the gross letters or Varṇas. Kundali when with one coil is Bindu, with two prakriti purusha in visarga form, with three the Iccā, Jñāna and Kriyāsakti and triguṇas sattva, Raja and Tamah ; but with the three and half she is actually creative with Vikruti in which form actually it rests at the mulādhāra chakra. With four coils She is Devi Ekajatā which is very often identified with the Mahāvidyā Nilasarasvati. In Sakti sangama-Tantra the Kundalini has been described as with the ten coils as the Dasamahāvidyā. Now for mantra Siddhi it has to be recited the technical name of which is known as Japa. Japa is defined as 'विधावेन मन्त्राच्चारणं जपम्'. The Satkarmadvipika mentions that mantras written in books even if recited hundred thousand times cannot bring Siddhi.[10] Thus repeated recitation of mantra has to be made according to certain rules and procedures which may be learnt from the Guru, the initiator. Tantrasāra describes three kinds of Japa, Bachika or verbal Japa, in which the mantra is audibly recited. Upāmsu Japa which is superior to Bāchika Japa and in which the tongue and lips move without sound or at best with a slight whisper. And lastly the mānasa Japa or the mental utterance. In mānasa Japa there is neither any sound nor any movement of any external organ. While repeating this Japa in mind attention should be given on meaning of the mantra. This is the best kind of Japa. At the time of Japa the worshipper should have physical cleanliness, wear silk garments, seat on an elevated āsana, avoid agitation of mind etc. In order to be efficacious Japa should be of a specified number of times. And Japa of 108 times is the best. It needs counting which can be done with a mālā or with the thumb of the right hand upon the joints of the fingers of that hand.

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[9] S. T. Ch I चैतन्यं सर्वभूतानां शब्द ब्रह्मेति मे मतिः
तत् प्राप्येय कुण्डलीरूपं प्राणीनां देहमध्यगम्
वर्णात्मनाभि र्भवति गद्यपद्यादि भेदतः ।

[10] पुस्तके लिखिता विद्या येन सुन्दरि जप्यते
सिद्धि र्न जायते देवी कल्पकोटीशतैरपि ।

Regarding repetition of mantra there is also another rite which is known as purascharana. The 'purascharana-bodhini' enunciates the method of this ritual in clear details. Purascharana has to be done on a decorated pendal of approved size; the Sādhaka should eat havisānna or boiled milk, fruits, vegetables or anything obtained by begging. His food should not contain such materials that would arouse passion. This is performed for the destruction of sin and for as many lakhs of times as the letters contained in the bijamantra. Three days before purascharana Ganesh and Kshetrapala are to be invoked and the worshipper taken panchagabya. Samkalpa has to be made with a Kalasa into which the Devi is invoked. The mandala or a figure of particular design is marked on the ground on which the Ghata is placed. Five or nine gems are placed on the Kalasa which is also painted and covered with leaves. The worshipper has to sit on posture with crown luck tied perform nyāsa and then start Japa of the mantra. After mantra Japa, one tenth times of the Japa so made ghee should be offered to the sacrificial fire, otherwise puraschara will not be efficacious. By this process mantra-chaitanya is achieved and the desired result is obtained. In all the Dasamahāvidyā stotras it has been mentioned that without purascharana there will be no 'mantrasiddhi'. As in Atharbana Rahasya dealing with Laxmi-hrudaya Stotra it has been mentioned as under :

इदं रहस्यं हृदयं सर्वकामफलप्रदम्
ज यपः पन्चसहस्रन्तु पुरश्चर्रणमुच्यते ।

All this discussion would clearly go to show that the Dasamahāvidyā worship lays emphasis on mantra Sakti which in its trail brings both material and spiritual attainments. In Tārāhrudaya it has been mentioned that by uttering the mantra 'strim hrim hum krim phat' and envigourating water with this mantra if a patient is allowed to take bath in this water all his diseases will be cured. Similarly by uttering the mantra 'Krim Svāhā' if sandal paste is applied on the forehead by a worshipper he can please everybody. By obtaining ashes from cremation ground and uttering the mantra 'strim hrim krim svāhā' if this ash is flung on an enemy's person or on his house he is sure to die. Similarly there are mantras for Ucchātana of the enemy and also to entice women. All these were intended for acquisition of power by the worshipper and evocation of matrasakti was undoubtedly a power craze. Despite all this as to why then ordinary method of worship be adopted when simple recitation of the mantras could entitle the worshipper for power. Since mind cannot seize pure spirit by way of mantra Japa it must necessarily have before it some definite object in the form pratimā or image representing the Supreme power. Life is invoked into this image and after that the natural course to be adopted by the worshipper is to propitiate the deity present in the image. And for this propitiation the Sodasa Upachāra Pujā or external worship is performed. While offering this worship by elaborate methods of nyāsa, mudrā, archanā, etc. unity is established between the consciousness of the worshipper within him and the Supreme consciousness represented by the image. Then the image no longer remains as a mass of stone or metal but consciousness itself. The deity becomes chaitanyamayee and that unity of consciousness elevates the worshipper to a higher level enabling him to enter into more rigid paths of Yoga. This propitiation also includes among other things reading of stotras, kabachas and hrudayas and reading of a hundred or a thousand names of the deity. It has been mentioned in Brahmayāmala Tantra while enumerating 108 names of the deity Sodasi that by reading out these 108 names of the deity all sins will be washed out. Similarly in Vairava Tantra it has been mentioned that by worshipping Devi Chhinnamastā and reading out her Kabachas for a year the entire world would be won and all material benefits will accrue. By reading out Bagalāmukhi hrudayam as mentioned in Siddheswara Tantra there will be no want for the worshipper and all his enemies would be defeated and put to calumny. The worshipper would also be bereft of all sins and nobody would dare opposing him. The Viswasarodhāra Tantra mentions that by reciting Bagalāmukhi Kabacha if somebody goes to his master or king, the latter would be at the former's beck and call. In this way we will find that there is no dearth of power-craze in Dasamahāvidyā upāsanā although the ultimate end i. e. Mukti has been indicated, with clear terms, but not as strongly as the former.

CHAPTER V

THE RELEVANCE OF MAHAVIDYA UPASANA IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGION

History dawned with predominance of women in society and family level. As to why this happened will be a mere conjecture but a coherent flow of civilization may be traced to account for it. According to Prof. E. O. James an adequate supply of offspring and food being a necessary condition of human existence, the promotion and conservation of life have a fundamental urge from palaeolithic times to the present day which has found agico-religious expression in a very deeply laid and highly developed cultus. Exactly when and where it arose a still very obscure, but it was from Western Asia, the South Russian plain and the valley of the Don, that female figurines, commonly called 'Venuses' in bone, ivory, stone and bas-relief often with maternal organs, grossly exaggerated were introduced into Western and Central Europe. With the transition from food-gathering to food-production the female principle continued to predominate the cultus that had grown up arround the mysterious forces of birth and generation. But although phallic emblems became increasingly prominent from Neolethic times onwards, the maternal principle in due course personified as Mother Goddess, continued to assume the leading role in the cultus, especially in Western Asia, crete, and the Aegeais, where the male God was subordinate to the Goddess. Very probably the ancient people grasped the generative function of women as Sine-qua-non'.to their earthly existence and sought magically to apply it to the animals and plants that nourished them. It was commonly believed that the Mother Earth and women belong to the same category and the 'Raja parva' in Orissa significantly indicates the Mother Earth to be a menstruating Goddess which is worshipped on the Raja Samkrānti day. At Mohenjodaro we came accross deities in the form of male and female generative organs. It has therefore aptly been told that the origin of the Tāntric Yoni-cult is deeply ingrained in this prehistoric substratum of the Hindu Religion of the 3rd Millenium BC.

The Tāntric Shri Chakra is nothing but the representation of the female generative organ. The word Tantra is derived from the root 'tan', meaning 'to spread', to multiply[1] while explaining Tantra it has been told that Tantra is that which multiplies or enables acquisition of great riches and also saves from the dangers of the world[2]. Tāntric rituals are older than the Tāntric text themselves. Their original purpose was to increase productivity, fertility of the earth and women. Primarily phallus was the symbol of the act of the cultivation while the Yoni represented the Mother Earth as has been told by Manu.

'Iyam bhumirhi bhutānām Sāsvati yonirucyate.'

This gradually led to the worship of mother Goddess in all parts of the world under different names, but with substantial similarity of myth and rituals. So such myths are associated with indiscriminate sexual intercourse even at the sanctuary of the Goddess ensuring better harvest and increase in men and the material production. This was also true in the case of the Vedic India as described in 'Satapatha Brahmana' wherein numerous passages identify sexual union with Yajña. In the Asvamedha Yajña the queen has to have sexual union with the priest. The Vājapeya Yajña abounds in sexual elements. The Bruhadāraṇyaka Upanisad mentions that the 'Upastha' of a woman is to be conceived as the Yajña Vedi, the public hairs as the sacrificial grass, the 'bahirscharman' as the adhisthān of the soma plants, and the two elbia of the Vulva as the inner-most fire. It has been said that he who remembers this during coition gets the reward of the Vājapeya sacrifice. In the Chhāndogya Upanisad it has been mentioned that a summoner lies down together with women. This is technically known as Udgitha. He lies upon the women, that is known as pratihāra and when he comes to an end in copulation it is known as nidhāna. This is known as Vāmadevya sāman by chanting with which if a copulation is made that brings long life, large offspring and cattle and great fame.

So there is no wonder that in Tantra Sāstra special importance is attached to the rituals centering round the female genital organ. These rituals are called Bhaga-Yoga or Lata-Sādhanā and the use of Yantra as representation of the Tāntric Goddess is nothing but the representation of the female organ as seat of the deity. At the time of worship the Yantra was first drawn upon the ground as the generative organ, there upon a purṇa-kumbha symbolising the female womb is placed. So scholars have identified this worship as a symbolic fertility rite[3].

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[1] The Indian Mother Goddess–By N. N. Bhattacharya, Page-10.

[2] तनोति विपुलान् अर्थान् तत्रमन्त्रसमन्वितान्
त्राणं च कुरुते यस्मात् तन्त्रमित्यभिधीयते ॥

Even in Old Arabian Religion Gods and Goddesses appear in pairs, the Goddess being the greater and the God smaller in size possibly representing the God as the son of the former. In Egypt the glory of Goddess 'Osiris' predominates that of 'Isis'. In Asia minor and round the shores of the Mediterranian are found many examples of mother Goddess with a young subordinate God by her side. In punic Africa she is 'Tanit' with her son, in Egypt, Isis with 'Hours', in Phoenicia, Asthtaroth' with 'Tammuz', in Asia minor Cybele with 'Attis', in Greece 'Rhea' with young 'Zeus'. These Goddesses were never spoken as married but becoming mothers first of their companion by immaculate conception. This goes to prove that original conception were of vergin Goddess where the father had no significance at all. Though Dr. Bhattacharya has accepted these myths as the precursors of the Tāntric Goddess symbolism the basic factor is otherwise. Because though the Tāntric Goddesses or the Mahāvidyā Goddesses are invoked as mother or the supreme chitsakti, the Lord Śiva shown trampelled under her feet is not a son to the Goddess but the Supreme Consciousness itself, the former Vimarsa and the latter Prakāsa Sakti.

In the vedic pantheon of important Goddesses we find a number of deities like Aditi, Usas, Saraswati, but they occupy a very subordinate position in the vedic religion. In post-vedic religion these Goddesses are mentioned alongwith Ida and Bhārati, Prasana as wife of Indra, Agnāyi, Baruṇāni, Aswini, Rodasi etc. But here they are merely insignificant female counterparts of the male Gods like Indra, Agni etc. Even the personified abstract Goddesses like puramdhi, Bruhaddiva, Rākā, Sinivāli, Araṇyāni, Prusni, Suryā-Laxmi, Sree and Sradhā hardly symbolise an all-pervading female principle and it cannot be held that these vedic Goddesses are symbolising as the precursors of the

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3. The Indian Mother Goddess—By N. N. Bhattacharya, Page-14

Tāntric Goddesses what to speak of visualising the psychology of Dasamahāvidyā Goddesses in them. But the description of Ambikā as Rudra's sister in the Vājasaneyi Samhita and in Taitiriya Brāhmaṇa and its description as his spouse in Taitiriya Āraṇyaka alongwith invocation of the deities like Durgi, Vairochani, Kātyāyani, Kanyākumāri, Umā-Haimavati in various Āraṇyakas and Upanisads and the description of Kāli and Karāli in Mundaka Upanisad and that of Bhadrakāli may be treated as having definite semblance with Tāntric Goddesses, in view of their characteristic features similar to those of the latter. In great epics of Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata we find descriptions of Durgā and Sree and Laxmi, but these great epics have almost pointed them as very good and ideal housewives. Whatever description of Goddesses like Ambikā, Aparṇā, Bhadrakāli, Kāli, Kausiki, etc, we find mentioned here they were mostly of Saivite affiliation and have been described as divine mother playing the role of assisting their husband in annihilation of demons. In only later purāṇas deities having the same name influenced the course of religion that ultimately brought in a Sākta cult having predominating Sakti worship. As has already been told this Sākta-tāntric cult was not only peculiar to Hinduism but also overwhelmed the Buddhist and Jaina religious thinking and philosophy. Ultimately in the 'Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa' wherein 'Durgasaptasati' has been found place, the glory of the Almighty Goddess Durgā was revealed in its fullest extent. Here the mother Goddess has been manifested as an embodiment of the Supreme consciousness whence all the worlds have issued. The Devi-māhātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa composed between the 3rd and the 5th century AD euunciates the Sākta principles treating Sakti as the premordial cause of all the worlds. She has been described as incomprehensible, and ultimate resort of all the world. She has been comprehended as the essence of all the scriptures, a boat to cross the ocean of existence. We find similar descriptions in Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa, Matsya, Kurma, Śiva Garuda and Brahmapurāṇas. But only Mārkandeya and Bāmana purāṇas abound in Devi orientation having terrible demon—slaying features described as Kāli, Kousiki, Chandikā, etc. Although it has been harped by many scholars that these naked Goddesses like Kāli etc. must have been originally worshipped by tribals these are unfounded because the principles of Tantra explain their appearances philosophically and that too completely from a different angle quite unthinkable even to scholarly Vedic Hindus, what to speak of tribal religions of aboriginal origin. Thus the development of the Tāntric religion could not be traced back to the aboriginal Mother Earth worship rather to the sporadic Upanisadic thoughts of female deities. The description of Umā-maheswari in Kenopanisad, the role of Mātrukās in Devi legends of the Mahābhārata and finally in the Devi Saptasati of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa would go a long way to conceive the idea of the Tāntric Dasamahāvidyā and their worship. The ten Avatāras of the Lord as has already been said must have also a bearing on conceiving the supreme Goddess in ten different forms in a line with the different forms of the Devi Durgā while killing Sumbha and Nisumbha. The Devi Bhāgabata, otherwise known as the Mahāvāgabata Purāṇa describes the Devi as Ādyāsakti or premodial energy that rests in Brahma as the creating principle, in Vishṇu as the sustaining principle and in Śiva as the principle of dissolution. This Supreme Sakti pervades all space and animates all things of this phenomenal world. The unmanifested Ādyāsakti assumes three forms of Mahālaxmi, Mahākāli and Mahāsaraswati representing the Rājase, Satvika and Tamas attributes of Prakruti. Mahālaxmi produces Brahmā and Sree, Mahākāli, Rudra and Trai, and Mahāsaraswati Vishṇu and Umā.[4]

Thus down the ages right from the Vedas the progress of religion marks a definite place for Female worship or Mother worship ultimately identifying it with realisation of Supreme principle, or the Over-lord of all the worlds. The Sākta religion assumed tāntric characteristic by coming in contact with the Buddhist Tantras and Jaina religion and the Pancharātra and Saivāgamas. And since these treatises of tantricism became more and more abstract and remained under the secret grasp of a few Siddhas, Sāktas and Yakshas the Dasamahāvidyā worship came as a saving device to the religious world of the greater Bhāratvarsa. As the elaborate vedic sacrifices could no more contain the religious urge of the then Indians the magnificent and sublime philosophy of the Upanishads came and

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4. Hymns to the Goddess and Hymn to Kali–Sir J.W., Introduction.

showed the light to the disheartened Sādhakas, similarly the highly metaphysical and abstract thoughts of Buddhism and Jainism gave way to a ritual-ridden cult of Dasamahāvidyā worship where all the different types of people beginning from Pasubhāva (people guided by lower instincts of animalism) to Divyabhāva (people guided by the higher intellect and moral upliftment) could find a cool resting place without either bothering for their humble disposition or otherwise. This Upāsanā could provide them with elevating stotras resounding in their ears and vibrating in their inner core thereby transforming their gross and the subtle body and preparing it as a rightful and beautiful altar of the Supreme consciousness in the form of Mahāvidyā. Here there was no hard and fast rule of worship, no stead-fast code of conduct, no apprehension of the red eyes of a cast-ridden society, no dogma against woman's unworthiness. Anybody who could even mechanically place the deities on his limbs (by way of nyāsa), who could recite Stotras, Kabachas, Kilakas, Hrudayas or even Sata or Sahasra nāma or even can count beads with cryptic Bija mantras of HRIM, KRIM, SRIM, etc. was welcome to the altar of the Great Goddess the Mahāvidyās, otherwise known as the dispensesor of all avidyās of all category of persons or the torch-bearer in the path of involution granting both Bhukti and Mukti in the process. And that is the relevance of Dasamahāvidyā Upāsanā in the history of religion. The path of religion with elaborate methods of Sama, Dama, Niyama etc. for realisation of a greater truth was already there but negating and despising the present mundane existence that brought the downfall of all marvellous religious systems with Yoga backgrounds. The Dasamahāvidyā Upāsanā never despises Bhoga but contemplates sublimation of all these mundane state into an elaborate field of Yoga by mystically transforming every method of Bhoga to a higher consciousness capable of giving the taste of the ultimate, be it sājujya, sārupya or sālokya. A wilful benign surrender or a watchful elevation of gross consciousness was the Key note which could transform the stagnant water of a pond to the sacred flow of the Gangā. And this cult could neither be termed as Buddhist nor Hindu but a Sanātan Dharma, an eternal principle of higher consciousness suitably mingling the world with the world-beyond.

The relevance of Sākta-tāntric religion in general and the Dasamahāvidyā religion in particular would be more gloring and vivid when viewed with the latest conceptual revolutions brought out by modern science that mechanistic world view has had its limitations and the world should be viewed with an organic and ecological manner which shows great similarity to the views of mystics of all ages and tradition.

CHAPTER VI

PHILOSOPHY OF DASAMAHAVIDYA VIS-A-VIS OTHER SYSTEMS

(a) The Philosophy Behind Worship and Images :

Rituals form a greater part of the Tāntric worship and this has engendered a belief even to the present-day that there is no Tāntric worship without rituals. The ritualistic predominance in Tāntric Sādhanā is quite in consonance with the Vedic Worship of sacrifice as has been stated earlier. Although certain elements featuring in Tāntric rituals brought the system into great disrepute, the system itself cannot be blamed because of its underlying principles both psychological and philosophical. As has been rightly remarked by Rishi Aurobindo regarding idol worship that such worship provides for the worship of the form and formless. He has questioned 'How can the formless invest himself with form ?' The Universe is there to reply. Hinduism worships Nārāyaṇa in the stone, tree, the animal, the human being. This is very often scorned as ridiculous by the intellectuals who condemn religion of idol-worship. But they forget, sticks and stones, the quadruped and the human being, all these are equals in God, our brothers in the Divine, forms that the Omnipresent has not disdained to assume. But beyond the material forms there are others that are ideal and symbolic, but not less, if anything more real, more full of Divine Power than any actual physical manifestation. There are also mental images employed in the worship God. If there is a consciousness in the Universe and transcending it which answers to the yearning of these creatures and perhaps Itself yearns towards them then it is idle to suppose that it would assume or create for It's own pleasure and glory the forms of the Universe, but would disdain as an offence to It's dignity or purity those which the love of the worshipper offers to It and which after all Itself has formed in his heart or his imagination. To these mental forms mental worship may be offered and this is the higher way ; or we may give the material foundation, the Pratisthā of a statute or a picture image to form a physical nodus for a physical act of worship.[1]

This would now amply justify the tāntric way of worship of images or a Yantra because the underlying philosophy behind it is that in our human ignorance, with our mental passion for degrees and distinctions, for superiorities and exclusions, we thus grade these things and say that this is superior and that is for ignorant and inferior souls. The theist looks down with reprobation on the form-adoring, image worshipping idolators and polytheist. The Advaitin looks down with a calm and tolerant indulgence on the ignorance of the quality—adoring personality-bemused Theist. Ultimately Sri Aurobindo replies to these non-believers thus. It seems to us that God scorns nothing, that the soul of all things may take as much delight in the prayer of a little child or the offering of a flower or a leaf before a pictured image as in the philosophers leap from the summit of thought into the indefinable and unknowable and that he does best who can rise and widen into shoreless realisation and yet keep the heart of a little child and the capacity of the seer of forms.[2]

Thus the Tantras have kept the idea of idol worship not as a mere idolatry practice but worship of the mother of the world whose form is that of the Sabda-Brahman and whose substance is bliss. Although in a little image She appears as a hand-made picture of the devotee She is the Premordial One, Mother of countless creatures, Creatrix of the bodies of the Brahmā, Vishṇu and Śiva, who creates, preserves and destroys the world. This All-Blissful Almighty Mother is youthful and full of tenderness as if visible to the surrendered heart in the form of crushed collyrium or of blue-saphire colour. This is the supreme meaning of the great Devi Symbol as has been described in the Tantrasāra. Thus on the whole in Tāntric system the aspirants have made greatest of attempts to embrace the whole of God manifested and unmanifested in the ado-

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1. Collected works of T. V. Kapali Sastri, Vol-1, P. 330-331.
2. Collected works of T. V. Kapali Sastri, Vol-1, Page 331-332

ration and worship of the Supreme Devi. And that forms the basis of image worship.

In particular the Dasamahâvidyā image consists of both Śiva and Sakti, Śiva lying down over which Sakti is standing erect in a naked form holding various weapons in Her hands as has already been described. The Dasamahāvidyā enjoins worship of the ultimate irreducible real which forms the source of all determinations. This power is both to be, to self conserve, and to resist change as also to be the efficient cause of all changes, and as material cause to become and suffer change. Thus it is Divinity in its dual aspects called Śiva, the Power-holder and Sakti, the Power. Such an image also suggests that in the supreme alogical state Power-to-Be and Being-Power-Holder are merged in one another. It has been explained in Yogini Hrudaya Tantra that only Śiva knows the heart of Yogini, or in other words the Divine Mother in the form of all that exists is essentially one with all that Becoming. And since neither motherhood nor fatherhood can be attributed to Supreme Reality it is expressed in a conjoined form Śiva-Sakti, that is Being-Consciousness-Bliss.

The Tantra further presupposes that in this alogical state the 'Aham' wanted to know the 'Idam'. And at this supreme desire of the Ultimate Consciousness Śiva saw himself as Cit-Sakti that is consciousness-power in the form of the Goddess Mahāvidyā. So the Tantra Sāstra points out that the image of the Devi with Śiva is the state prior to its assuming the power of Creatrix, that is unmanifest stage. And Since prior to creation there was no time nor space, the deity is imagined naked, i.e. bereft of all sense of time and space. The other iconographic details are just imaginations invented to satisfy the seer or the worshipper i.e. the Abhaya and Varadā mudrā, symbolising the power of granting boon and fearlessness. The holding of Pāsa and Ankusha symbolises that the world is a Bandhana or Pāsa and the Jiva is suffering being bound in it. Even then he need not worry because the Almighty Mahāvidyā would destroy this Pāsa and liberate the Jiva by Her ankusha which is the consciousness in man and always leads him Godward. The severed head in Her hand shows that the prapancha or the Universe will ultimately return to her by way of involution as it was evolved from Her and such involution is achieved by her destructing power represented in the form of Kartri and Khadga, Knife and Sword. Also Her holding up of a cup in Her hand where blood from a severed head is deposited symbolises that the creation, conservation and dissolution is a continuous process as nobody can say when creation began and when it will be completely destroyed. By way of holding a cup the Mahāvidyā symbolises that the truths of birth, life and death are only known to Her as a repository of all Supreme Knowledge. Thus the Mahāvidyā, as it were, disengages Herself as power from the embrace in which Śiva and Sakti are fused in one and then represents Herself to Him. On this representation Cit-Sakti assumes certain postures preparatory to the issuing forth of the Universe and then when Sakti is fully concentrated (ghanibhutā) the prapancha is manifested. The symbol of Chhinnamastā, a deity of Dasamahāvidyā Pantheon shows that She is holding Her own severed head and drinking Her own blood oozing out from Her trunk. This image symbolises that the Supreme consciousness is attained only when the body-consciousness is dissolved but not by forsaking the body completely but by drinking the nectar oozing out of this body-consciousness or arousing the Sakti inside the body, the Supreme Consciousness can be achieved as has been described in Chhinnamastā Tantra : स्व कवन्ध-शोणित-सुधाधारां पिवन्ति मुदाम् ।

The other important aspect is regarding seat of the Devi. As has been pointed out by Sir John Woodroffe, the Supreme self as cause of the Universe is the metaphysical point Bindu. In being Power-about-to-evolve there is a stressing of power which gathers itself together to expand again as universe. Bindu is therefore power in that concentrated state in which it is ready and about to evolve the Universe. This is the maṇi (Gems) idea in the Dasamahāvidyā stotras. This Bindu being a source of tremendous energy is exhibited in a grand way in the physical ether although originally it was an atom in the spiritual ether, which is otherwise known as Isle of gems (Maṇidvipa) and this is the seat of Devi Sodasi and Mahā-Tripurā-Bhairavi. The Maṇidvipa is forested with blooming and fragrant trees and in its leaves, the black bees hump, and the Kokila birds are in sexual enjoyments. Its four branches are the four Vedas, in the Centre there is a house made of Chintāmaṇi stone which grants all desire ; in the house there is a jewelled Maṇdapa. Under it and on a Gemed-golden-throne the Mahā Tripurāsundari Sodasi as the deity of the

Bindu form sits either in Paryankāsana or ardha-paryankāsana. It is also the same mandap incase of Tripurā Bhairavi, Bhuvaneswari, Bagalāmukhi and Mātangi. However in most cases the Dasamahāvidyā Devi appears red, for red is the active colour and she is here creative as Vimarsa Sakti or the 'Idam' of the Supreme Exprencier Śiva which through operation of Māyā becomes the Universe. By operation of māyā the Idam is experienced by mind as separate and different from as something outside the 'Aham'. The Mahāvidyā Sodasi sits on two inert male figures which lie on a six-sided throne. The upper figure is Sakala Śiva who is awake because He is associated with His Sakti as efficient and material cause. On His head the crescent digit moon called Nāda, a tāntric nomenclature for state of stressing power appears just on the eve of creation. Because here Sakti is now creative. The inert Śiva figure is the symbol of Immutable Being. He is white because He is Consciousness and illumination. Consciousness illuminates and makes manifest the forms evolved by its power which in its turn by supplying the form as unconscious object helps Siva to display Himself as the Universe which is Both Being and Becoming. The other male figure darker in colour represents colourlessness with closed eyes. This is mysterious niskala Śiva lying like a corpse. This means that Śiva without His power or Sakti cannot do anything.

Besides there are also Yantra symbols. The Śiva is represented by a triangle standing on its base. A triangle is selected for the purpose as the only geometric figure representing Trinity in Unity, i. e. the Icchā, Jñāna, and Karma Sakti of the One Ultimate consciousness Śiva. The Sakti is also represented by a triangle because the Power and Power-holder are one. But the Sakti triangle is shown-reversed. The inner meaning of this reversal is that all is reversed when reflected in the waters of māyā. In otherwords, the Jiva although is the same consciousness, loses it due to the operation of māyā and feels itself bound in the pāsa. And once the worshipper understands this inner meaning of the Yantra it is no more a geometrical figure but a conscious figure of Śiva-Sakti incarnate. Both Śiva and Sakti are that Supreme joy (paramānanda), the Sakti being the 'wave of bliss'. But She is also the giver of world-joy Bhukti. Since it is She who becomes the universe, She is the 'wave of beauty'. Therefore Tantras do not deny the world but advocates attainment of liberation by and through the world. Thus the world-enjoyment is not shunned in Tantra but is made the means and instrument of liberation. The super-imposition of triangle in Yantra shows the union of Śiva and Sakti. The lotuses circumscribing the triangle represent the beautiful creation out of the union of Śiva and Sakti and the outermost surrounding figure of fourgates known as 'Bhupura' is called a fence that māyā has created to have a separate feeling between the created and the creator. Repetition of such triangles in some of the Yantras are nothing but representations of various subordinate Devas and Devis presiding over forms of mind, life and body and their special functions. All forms in so far as these are, psychophysical, subtle or gross, are manifestations of the power of their immanent essence which is Spirit of Infinite consciousness. That 'essence' is itself One and Changeless but as related to a particular psychophysical form as it's cause and Director of its function. It is its presiding consciousness, mind and matter (nāmarūpa) as such are guided by self. They are involved in and directed by consciousness. The presiding consciousness of the form (rupa) and its function is its presiding Devatā. A Deva is therefore the consciousness-aspect of the psychophysical form. For example, the Deva Agni is the one consciousness in its aspect as the Lord of fire. A Devatā may also mean an aspect as the causal consciousness Itself and so Mahā-Tripurā-Sundari is the name given to the creative aspect of such Cosciousness-power and Mahākāli is that aspect of the same consciousness-power which dissolves all the worlds.[3]

The object of worship of the Yantra as has been already said is to attain Unity with the Sakti of the Universe in her forms as mind, life and matter, and their Devatās as preparatory to Yoga Union with her as She is in Herself pure consciousness. The World is thus divinised and the consciousness of the worshipper and the Yantra transformed in its consciousness from a material object of lines and curves into a mental state of Union with the Universe its Divinities and Supreme Deity. At such realization the body-mind consciousness is merged with the bodyless-mindless consciousness.

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3. Sakti and Sakta Pages—273-274, Sir J. W.

According to the Sāmkhya and Vedānta view mind is not consciousness as the latter is immaterial. Mind on the other hand is a quasi-material principle of unconsciousness which appear to be conscious by reason of its association with consciousness. It is certain a force having the power of consciousness to limit itself and to the extent of such limitation it appears unconscious. According to Sākta view a mind-ray goes forth to the object of worship, the image which in its turn shapes the mental substance into the form of the object. Thus when a worshipper meditates on the image of Dasamahāvidyā intently and without distraction, his mental substance takes the form of the image. Because it would leave an impression on the mind and after such repeated impressions a Samskāra is set forth destroying all previous samskāra. In this way not only the mind but the entire consciousness of the worshipper is moulded and transformed.

As Gandharba Tantra mentions, by meditating anything as the self one becomes that things. Since every thought has a corresponding change in the material substance of the brain the ritualistic selection of the body and mind of the worshipper is permeated with the Divinity itself. Sincere and continued effort by way of ritualistic worship transforms the worshipper into a likeness with the divinity worshipped. And the difference between worshipper and worshipped ceases in that unitary consciousness which iś Transcendent perfect experience. And that is why so much of advocacy for pratimā pujā in the Tantras and also in Dasamahāvidyā Upāsanā.

There are different ingradients of worship called Upachāra. These are psychophysiological rites enabling mind to be shaped into the form of the image. But the perception of a material image is not enough. The worshipper must see the divinity in it. This he invokes into the image by 'āvāhana' and 'prāṇapratisṭhā' ceremonies. He also bids adieu the deity after completion of the worship. A question may here arise as to how a deity is made to come and go. In fact the deity being omnigresent cannot be made to go nor to come. It is always there. The only thing meant by such invocation is that the worshipper informs his own mind with the notion that the deity is present thereby he is conscious of the presence of the deity and meditates on it and its attributes. As a result his mind and thought are divinely shaped. In order that the body is made to take part with full absorption in the ritual, appropriate mudrā and other acts like prostrations, offering libations and so on and so forth are adopted. Such ritualistic adoptions are of various kinds as mentioned below :

Mudrā or gesture of hands is most commonly used in rituals. There are different types of mudrā known as Matsya mudrā, Dhenu mudrā, Sambāra mudrā, etc. In matsya mudrā the hands represent a fish and its fins. This gesture indicates that the worshipper is offering not only the small quantity of water which is contained in the ritual vessels, but that he imagines to give to the deity all the oceans with fish and other marine animals. Gesture emphasises and intensifies thought. Similarly the principle behind āsana is to secure a comfortable seat favourable to meditation and worship as otherwise bodily discomfort would affect concentration at the time of worship. Another method of ritual is Japa or recital of mantras. As has already been told Mantra is divine power manifesting in a sound-body, the Sabdabrahman.[4] The prime mantra is 'OM' which is known as prasaba. It represents the first premodial movement of divine power towards the manifestation of the universe. By repeating mantra mantra-sakti or mantra chaitanya is aroused supplementing the worship power or Sādhanā Sakti of the worshipper. By constant Japa emphasis is laid on the unity of human power and divine power Ātmasakti and Daiva Sakti.

It has already been said that nyāsa or placing of the hands of the worshipper on different parts of his body while reciting mantra is a very important rite By it the Sādhaka imagines that different deities are placed on different limbs of his body. The rite terminates with a clasp of both his hands reciting Astraya phat. The principle behind such nyāsas in tāntric rituals is to imagine the deity pervading the worshippers body, hereby renewing and divinising it. The body of the Sādhaka is thus purified and transformed as if it was also the body

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4. आधारे लिंग नाभौ हृदयसरसिजे तालुमूले ललाटे द्वेपत्रे षाडशारे द्विदशहशदशदले द्वादशार्धे चतुष्के नासान्ते फालमध्ये डफकठसहिते कण्ठमध्ये स्वराणां हक्षं ततार्थयुक्तं सकलदलशतं वर्णरूपं नमामि ।—Satchakranirupana.

of the deity. Another important rite is 'Bhutasuddhi', meaning purification of the elements of which the body is composed. This rite afforts the foundation on which the whole edifice of tāntric Yoga is raised with devotion, knowledge and will as its constituent elements. But even before entering into inner apartments of yoga where the psychophysical centres are contracted and opened on progress in Sādhanā, the tāntric beginner devoted to his choosen deity is advised to effect the 'bhutasuddhi' without which the presence of the deity cannot be felt, and the grace of the deity even when it comes by a fervent emotional appeal cannot be properly received and even when received, be adequately held and effectively retained in the vessel of the body. This is achieved by purifying various physical limbs and the inner mind-stuff ensuring not only eradication of the narrowing and obscuring influences of the elemental forces and universal weakness of the lower nature, but inviting in their place, the opposite good influences of the benign forces, the powers of the supra-physical worlds. That is why in the actual 'bhutasuddhi' every part is offered to a deity and the group of deities that are invoked to occupy their seats in the human ādhāra who constitute indeed the minor gods belonging to the family of the chosen chief, the Iṣṭadevatā. In Merutantra it has been mentioned that when the body in its entirety becomes fit to commune with the Devatā one must-restore and fix in their proper place the principles and Tattvas, hidden in the self. For this purpose from the heart lotus one must bring out Soul as the form of the Supreme Self and according to the rule by means of the 'Hamsamantra' one has to look upon the body as a luminous form of light and as having become quite competent for the worship of the deity.[5] Thus by bhutasuddhi a pure-spiritual turn is given to the Vruttis of Sādhaka forming a philosophic basis for Sakti Upāsanā. It has a double function, the negative and the positive, the former paving the way by clearance of the disagreeable forces of the negative side, i. e. the feeling of the purified parts by the presence of the power that are invoked to occupy their right places. And the principle behind the prāṇapratiṣṭhā ceremony is that a conscious force emanating from

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5. हंसमन्त्रेण विधिवत् तेजोरूपं कलेवरम्
देवतोपासने योग्यं उत्पन्नमिति भावयेत् ।—Merutantra.

the supreme soul in which the individual being abides is effectively infused to the image and unites it with the consciousness of the individual worshipper. As has been said by Sri Aurobindo, if the prāṇapratisṭhā brings down a powerful presence that may remain there long after the one who has brought it has left his body. Usually it is maintained by the devotion of the officiant and the sincerity of belief and worship of those who come to the temple of adoration. If these fail there is likely to be a withdrawal. All these and other rituals keep the mind of the worshipper engrossed in the thought of the Supreme power and of his essential unity with it with the result that he makes steady progress in his disposition towards his Isṭadevatā. For this the body is not an obstacle to liberation because there is no antenomy between Nature and Spirit, Nature is rather the instrument for the realization of the Spirit. Since the Supreme power is immanent in body and mind and these are also forms of its expression the psychophysiological rites of the Tantras make the body and its functions as a means of Sādhanā in the path of liberation. Therefore the tantra Sādhaka does not shun the world from fear of it but holds it in his grasp and learns its secret. He can do so because the world does not exist in isolation from some transcendent divinity exterior to nature but is itself the divine power in separate from the divine essence. When he has learnt this he escapes both from the servile subjection to circumstance and the ignorant driftings of a humanity which has not yet realised itself.[6] Therefore it has aptly been said in Mātangi Tantra that those who worship the Devi Mātangi would not fear defeat or calumny at any time from any hand.[7]

(b) *The Philosophy of Panchatattva Ritual* :

One of the speciality of Tāntric ritual is that it does not condemn wine and women symbolising desire. To a superfluous mind the Tāntric Panchamakāra Upāsanā may appear contrary to the moral

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6. Sakti and Sakta, Page—307, Sir J. W.

7. तव ध्यायन्ती ये वपुरनुजपन्ति प्रवलितं
सदा मन्त्रां मातर्न्न हि भवति तेषां परिभवः ।
—Sakta Pramoda, P. 337.

code of conduct enjoined by various religious scriptures. In fact at very many times Sākta Tantra with such Upāsanā has been condemned as a scripture of libertinism thinly veiling itself in pseudo-religious forms. As a result the Tāntric Upāsakas are supposed to be sensual men and finding their wishes thwarted by the rules of morality of their fellowmen have somehow found out a religious sanction for fulfilment of their carnale desire little understanding that the Tāntric rituals have never advocated for sensualism. As otherwise the Kulārṇava Tantra would not have pointed out the frailty of men, the passing nature of this world and of all its gift to man. It has rather spelt out in clear terms that man-hood should be availed of for attainment of liberation which is beyond all grasp of senses. Similarly the Mohānirvāṇa Tantra proclaims a general code of conduct and condemned men who go with prostitutes, with women of prohibited degree, with the wives of others. This is clearly contrary to the Maithuna Tantra of Panchamakāra. Similarly this Tantra deplores the evil customs of the present age with its irreligion, lust adultery, gluttony and addiction to strong drinks. Of course, some people in order to justify the drinking principle of Panchamakāra have quoted Vaidic injunctions of taking liquor in the form of Soma. But they forget that even at that time in Usanah Samhita 'मद्यं अपेयं अदेयं अग्राह्यम्'. It is further asserted that during the Vedic times meat was eaten by the fair-coloured auburn-haired Aryans including even beef sacrificed and sanctified in the Yajña. Similar instances are also given where the bulk of the people both men and women eat fish and flesh previously offered to the deity. But the fact remains that the Vedic religion forbids the eightfold maithuna namely,—Smaraṇam, Kitanam, Keli, Prekshaṇam, Guhyabhāsaṇam, Samkalpa, Adhyabasāya and Kriyānispatti. In the Karpuradi Stotra the same injunctions are reiterated in the following lines 'मैथुनं तत् कथालापं तद्गोष्ठि परिवर्जयेत्।' 'Even for married couples it has been ordained that'—रुतुकालं विना देवि रमणं परिवर्जयेत् (नित्यातन्त)।

However, it now appears that the Panchamakāra Upāsanā are obscene rites adopted by the Tāntriks. Then the entire credibility of the Tantra Sāstra would fall on the ground. This is a complete misconception of the idea of Panchamakāra. Even the Tāntrik mantra for maithuna read as under[8] would go to show that here sexual union takes on the grandeur of a Yajña compared with which the ordinary animal copulation to ease desire cannot be compared. The maithuna has been conceived in this mantra as a cosmic activity of the Siva-Sakti. Thus the articles used in Panchamakāra do completely convey a different connotation as would be evident from the following verse in Chhinnamastā Tantra :

अलिपिसित-पुरन्ध्री-भोगपूजापरोऽहम्
वहुविध-कुलमार्गारम्भ-सम्भाभवितोऽहम् ।
पशुजन विमुखोऽहं भैरवीं आश्रितोऽहम्
गुरुचरणंरतोऽहं भैरवोऽहं शिवोऽहम् ॥

Thus a Vira Sādhaka of Tāntric religion has prayed to the deity Chhinnamastā to become one with the Mahāvidyā by adopting Panchamakāra Upāsanā.

How then will it be possible particularly when it has been said in Mahānirvāṇa Tantra that without the Panchatattva in one form or another Sakti pujā cannot be performed. The conception behind such thinking would be amply justified by the following observation by Sir J. W.—'If she appears as and in natural function she must be worshipped therewith, otherwise worship is fruitless.' The Mahāvidyā must be worshipped with these five elements namely,—Wine, Meat, Fish, Mudrā and Maithuna or their substitutes. The Mahānirvāṇa says that wine which gives joy and dispels the sorrows of men is fire, flesh, which nourishes and increases the strength of mind and body is Air. Fish which increases generative power is Water, Mudra or Cereals grown on earth and which are the basis of life is Earth, and sexual union which is the root of the world and the origin of all creation is Ether. So all these signify the power which produces all fiery elements, all terrestrial and aquatic life, all vegetable life and the Icchā, Jñāna, and Karmasakti of the Supreme prakriti productive of that great bliss which accompanies the process of creation (Kāmākshyā Tantra). The Kailash Tantra identifies this Panchatattva with the five

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8. धर्माधर्म हविर्दीप्ते आत्माग्नौ मनसा सृचा
सुषुम्ना वर्त्मना नित्यं अक्षवृत्ति जुहोम्यहम् ।
—Pranatoshini Tantra.

vital airs and the five Mahāpreta which support the couch of Mahātripurā-Sundari Sodasi.

Before going into details of these five M's this must be borne in mind that there is nothing impure in itself in natural functions though they be made by misuse or abuse the instruments of impurity. Impurity consists not in the act itself but the intention guiding the act. To a Vira Kaula all things, acts and functions done with right intentions may be instruments of worship. Therefore the natural functions of eating, drinking, and sexual union may not only be used as Upachāra of worship but can be made a very effective vehicle for attaining supreme bliss. Therefore the whole of life in all its rightful actions without any single exception may be an act of worship. By this way the sensual tendencies which these articles connote are transformed by gradually weaning them from enjoyment, by promulgating conditions under which alone such enjoyment could be had as a means to the supra-enjoyment.

The Panchatattva should not be taken in their literal meaning. They also differ according as they refer to the Pasvāchāra, Virāchāra or Divyāchāra way of worship. Thus according to Virāchāra, or Pratyakshatattva wine means wine where as according to the Anukalpatattva or Pasvāchāra it means cocoanut water or some other liquid and in Divyāchāra it is a symbol to denote the joy of Yoga knowledge Since the pasu is a lower order of worshipper he has to adopt the substitutional tattvas in view of his weak temperaments but a Vira-worshipper is not bothered about the reality of the Upachāra because he is above sensual attraction. Similarly a Divya worshipper being of the highest order in Sādhanā wine is spiritual knowledge to him. As has been mentioned in 'Panchatattva Vichāra' it is not any liquid but that intoxicating knowledge acquired by Yoga of the Parambrahma which renders the worshipper insensible towards the external World. Meat is not only fleshy thing but the act whereby the Sādhaka consigns all his acts to me (मां) that is the Lord, Fish is that spiritual knowledge by which all sense of mineness (मत्स्य) is absolved in the Lord whereby the Sādhaka sympathises with the pleasure and pain of all beings as if it happens to himself. Mudrā is the act of relinquishing all association with evil which results in bondage. Maithuna is the union of the Sakti Kundalini i.e. the world force in the lowest Yogic Centre mulādhāra chakra of the Sādhaka's body with the Supreme Śiva in the highest Centre Sahasrāra in the upper brain. As has been described in the Yogini Tantra such a union is not ordinary coition between man and women as would be evident from the passage below :

सहस्रारोपरि विन्दौ कुण्डल्यामेलनं शिवे
मैथुनं परमं द्रव्यं यतिनां परिकीर्त्तितम् ।

In Āgamasāra also we find similar such interpretation of pañchamakāra. According to it wine in the Somadhārā or lunarambrosia which drops from the Sahasrāra at the time of coition of the Kundalini with Supreme Śiva, Meat is the tongue (मा) of which its parts (शअं) is speech. So by Mānsa a Divyāchāri understands control of speech. Similarly Fish are those two Vāyus or currents constantly moving in the Yoga nerves called Ida and Pingala ; he who controls his breath by Prāṇāyāma is said to eat Matsya or these two currents of breath by retaining them in the process of Kumbhaka. Mudrā is the awakening of knowledge in the pericarps of the great Sahasrāra lotus where the Ātma resplendent as ten million suns and deliciously cool as ten million moons is united with the Devi Kundalini, the world force and consciousness in individual bodies after her ascent from the Mulādhāra in the Yoga system. According to Kāmadhenu Tantra the ruddy hue Agni (रं) is in the Mulādhāra kunda, the letter ma (म) white like the autumnal moon Sattvaganā Kaivalya rupā Prakrutirupini Mahāyoni which is like a lightening-like triangle in the Sahasrāra and also in the form of Bindu, i.e. condensed form of Sakti. When Makāra seated in the Hamsa, i.e. the bird which is the Śiva-Sakti pair in Jiva, in the form of Akara unites with Rakara then Brahmajñāna which is the source of Supreme Bliss is gained by the worshipper wherefor he is called Ātmārāma. Thats why it has been mentioned in Tantrasāra, from such yoga the Supreme Bliss issues forth—

'संयोगात् जायते सौख्यं परमानन्दलक्षणम् ।'

But for a pasu or a worshipper of lower order Madya is the Mādhavi flower, meat is of three kinds i.e. animals of the Water, Earth and Sky, but no female animal must be slain. Similarly fish is not an ordinary kind but of Sāla, rohita variety ; Mudrā is the cereals used in Upāsanā as has been defined in Yogini Tantra.[9] Besides it has been also mentioned in Mahānirvāṇa Tantra that all these five elements used in panchamakāra are used only after suddhi or purification and by that the elemental nature of these articles are consecrated and then presented to Devi. The Tantra also enjoins maithuna only with Sādhaka's brāhmi wife and in that way the pujyāsakti must be distinguished from the Bhogyāsakti. Thus this panchamakāra worship is an esoteric method having a completely different meaning from its ordinary sense. Since the Panchamakāra Upāsanā is meant for Vira-worshippers who have already made sufficient spiritual advancement the technicality of this worship must be understood in a different footing altogether. Since these methods are not forced abstentions but regulated use with the right bhāva, it engenders monistic feeling by way of gross and subtle Sāmarasya principle. Since Jiva is nothing but Brahman in another aspect the Supreme can be realized in every natural function provided there is no indulgence. Thus by associating animal nature with religious worship a passage from the state of desire of the ignorant pasu to the desirelessness of the competent Divya is effected and that is the philosophy behind the panchatattva upāsanā. In other words nothing is bad because it is of the manifested nature. It should be adopted as means to an end, more delightful and more of power and bliss. Sublimation of the lower nature is important in life and Tantra is an effective pointer in that regard.

(c) The Traditional Philosophy Vis-a-Vis Dasamahavidya :

The chief orthodox systems of Indian Philosophy are Mimāmsā, Nyāya, Vaishesika, Yoga, Sāmkhya and Vedānta. For the purpose of metaphysics these may be grouped into three—Nyāya-Vaishesika, Sāmkhya-Yoga, Vedānta, Mimāmsa being mostly a philosophy on the efficacy of words and their employment in rituals. All these systems teach the empirical reality of the external world. Even Śankarāchārya, the propounder of the doctrine of the unreality of the world emphatically affirms in his Polemic against the subjectivism of the Buddhist that matter is every whit as real as the mind which perceives it. The Nyāya-Vaishesika school teaches that the Absolute Reality is independent of the universe and there are the nine eternally existing ultimate entities of dravyas with their properties and relations etc. The Sāmkhya-Yoga system advocates Absolute Reality as the independent of universe the evolving material cause Prakruti associated with efficient cause of consciousness i.e. Purusa. Then the nine realities of the Nyāya-Vaishesika systems are reduced to two in Sāmkhya-Yoga system. Lastly the Vedānta system proclaims that the universe in ultimate resort is really not as independent but as part of the one ultimate Reality or Brahman It further illucidates that the universe whilst empirically real is neither real nor unreal in the transcendental sense. It is even not partly real and partly unreal but appears substantial though in essence it is Satchidananda Swarupa and therefore beyond all mind and speech although not unknowable.

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[9] भृष.धान्यादिकं यत् यत् चर्वणि यं प्रचक्षते
सा मुद्रा कथिता देवी सर्वेंषां नगनन्दिनी ।

Now coming to the Nyāya-Vaishesika system consciousness is recognised as a property and as such must inhere some reality which is independent of the body. In that case if consciousness cannot be the property of the body as a whole neither can it be a mere function of the brain, the brain theory of consciousness being open to the same objection as the one which maintains that consciousness is a property of the body. Similarly it may be argued that as consciousness is not the property of the body neither is it the property of life nor mind. So mind and senses are instruments of consciousness but the self as sustainer of consciousness is not any of these. Thus according to Nyāya-Vaishesika system self or Ātman as reality consciousness; if not then it is fundamentally different from Tāntric Dasamahāvidyā system as the latter admits one Reality having two aspects Śiva and Sakti, i.e. pure consciousness and its power in eternal union. The Nyāya-vaishesika view of the World is a compound of nine dravyas or entities and it exists independently of experience because its ultimate constituents are self-subsisting and independent of all perceiving entities or selves. This would no more hold water because according to the Tantra system, Matter is a reality so far as it is consciousness manifested and is not therefore independent of consciousness. The Nyāya-vaishesika view will appear more unsound when it is argued that during dissolution there exist all the Padārthas. Because the fundamental question will arise that where there is more than one thing there must exists some sort of relations. The selves or Ātmās in whom is there adrustas and their manas exist unconsciously without motion in Ākāsha, Kāla and Dik as inoperative. In that case the existence of Isvara as eternally conscious, willing and active but without production of the Universe would appear redundant and if existence of his necessity and creation is there it would lose its necessity during dissolution and should not therefore be eternal. The Tāntric Mahāvidyā system contrarily has given Isvara a secondary place as Hiraṇyagarva, i.e. a stage just on the eve of creation.

According to the Sāmkhya-Yoga system the consciousness and mind are kept in one side and the rest of the padārthas are brought under a common heading 'matter'. We thus get three things, Consciousness, Mind, and Matter. In the world we see constant change and we experience a continuity of consciousness as an unchanging self. On further examination it would find that mind is just a limited consciousness and notwithstanding all apparent change of form and matter, consciousness of spaceless and timeless self persists. Against this one fundamental question is raised as to how consciousness limits mind. Mind is actually unconscious according to Sāmkhya system but the Tāntric Dasamahāvidyā system admits mind as a veiled consciousness. According to this system consciousness is unlimited and all-pervading and therefore immanent however veiled in mind and matter. The universe is mind and matter in constant movement. In Sāmkhya this is Premordial Prakruti as inert, but the Tāntric system admits Prakruti as Mahāmāyā, the Premordial Energy-consciousness at the source of all creation. Moreover although Sāmkhya says that Prakruti as the source of the world is self-subsisting entity independent of the selves it is active before Purusa, the pure consciousness because of their association. The Tantra philosophy explains the world as the changing aspect of consciousness due to operation of Māyāsakti on pure consciousness and this Māyā unlike Vedāntic unknowable illusion is but Ādyāsakti Mahākāli of the Dasamahāvidyā Pantheon. It is the veiling power of consciousness having its instruments Icchā, Jñāna and Kriyā Sakti whereas the Vaishesika Ātman is a reality of which consciousness is not an essential inalienable characteristic but is that in which consciousness is only substained as reflected by Purusa as pure consciousness Itself. All the other eight realities of the Nyāya system are assigned to and included within Prakruti, the nonconscious principle of the Sāmkhya. The place of mana is taken by Antahkarana by which infinite experience is had and the place of four paramāṇus and Ākāshas is taken by the five Tanmātrā or forms of supersensible matter which in combination produce the particulars known as sensible matter. Kāla as time has no objective existence apart from the movement or absolute unit of change. Dik as the totality of position is construed as laws of actual relations of position intuited by emperical consciousness. Ākāsha stands to the various bounded objects in it. The category of causality is mediated through the scheme of order in time. In short space time and causality have been taken as empirical reality but not independent of things related. But the Dasamahāvidyā philosophy teaches that the Universe in all its forms is a manifestation of the Supreme Causal Energy substance itself.

As has been said by Sir J. W. in his 'The World as Power' Sāmkhya system may be converted into the Sākta doctrine of power or Sakti by substituting for the infinite purusas one Śiva and for Prakruti Śiva's power or Sakti and then affirmating that Śiva and Sakti are not as the Sāmkhya says, two independent realities but one reality in twin aspect, namely static and kinetic. The Sāmkhya Purusa is changeless consciousness, so is Śiva. Prakruti is as unlimited cause the principle of change and as effect limited changing forms which are as effects modifications of this cause. Sakti or power is that which in itself unchangeable, produces from itself as material cause the world of change. Śiva is the changeless consciousness whereas Sakti is consciousness-power which projects the universe from out of Itself. So the fundamental doctrine of the Tantra Mahāvidyā is that there is no Śiva without Sakti nor Sakti without Śiva. Thus in Sāmkhya there are two realities, but in Sakti Tantra there is only one with dual aspects. According to Sāmkhya evolution starts from Prakruti who is distinct from the Purusa. The Purusa is the efficient and the Prakruti the material cause. In Tāntric doctrine the world is evolved from and by the One Reality Śiva-Sakti of which one aspect does not change and another aspect is the cause of change and the change. The Sākta-darsan therefore propounds that the universe is the product of Citsakti and Māyāsakti, Cit being the efficient cause and Māyā the material. Citsakti like the Sāmkhyān Purusa is by its presence the efficient cause and yet the actionless witness.

Thus Sāmkhya is primarily a materialistic philosophy which holds that everything is produced by the evolution of Prakriti But the existence of Purusa could not be ignored and the spirit aspect of reality was attributed to it. Ultimately by subsequent commentators Purusa was equated with Brahman of Vedānta. But this has altered the plurality of Purusa and made it one consciousness in association with which the Prakriti could create the universe. Besides the cause-effect relationship of Sāmkhya brings it nearer svabhāvavāda. Gaudapada has therefore said that 'सांख्यानाम् स्वभावो नाम कश्चित् कारणमस्ति'. So Sāmkha was basically atheistic unlike the pure theistic doctrine of Mahāvidyā.

The philosophy of Lokāyatas or Cārvakas adheres to five basic principles, (1) Bhutavāda, according to which the four material elements—earth, water, fire and air—are the only real entities by the combination of which the Universe is formed ; (2) Dehātmavāda, which means that the concept of soul apart from the body is baseless ; (3) Pratyakshapramāṇavāda which means that of all the sources of valid knowledge, perception alone is acceptable ; (4) Svabhāvavāda, which recognises that things are as their nature makes them and (5) Paralokavilopavāda which holds that there can be no such thing as the other world. All these principles although influenced the Tāntric doctrine profoundly are quite different from the latter doctrine. The importance of body as microcosm in Tāntric philosophy may have acquired relevance from the Dehātmavāda. But the underlying philosophy is quite different and Tantra has very elaborate and clear thinking about Piṇda-Brahmāṇda Philosophy as to how everything is there in the Piṇda or body which is there in the

Brahmāṇda or the Universe which is the body of Mahāmāyā. The Svabhāvavāda of the Lokāyatas contribute to the importance of the sublimation of natural tendencies in man by which jivanmukti is possible and therefore the Tantras do not depise natural modes of sexual and other urges as has been described earlier.

The doctrine of Kāla is very ancient in Indian Philosophy. In Atharva Veda, Kāla has been described as the Cosmogonic agent and as the Lord of everything like the Mahākāli thinking of Dasamahāvidyā. The Svetasvetara also thinks 'Time' as the cause of the Universe. It is also accepted as the conductor of the knowledge of things. Time also forms part of the nine Nyāya-Vaisesika categories of substances. In Tantras however concept of time has been given prominence in the sense the Almightly Ādividyā Mahākāli features as the cessation and beginning of all Kālas, i.e. all ideas of time consciousness beyond which lies the eternal ocean of Mahākāla, the Supreme Consciousness.

Let us now compare Dasamahāvidyā doctrine with Dualistic view of Indian Philosophy. According to Sankara, since Brahman is one and without a second, there can be no reality apart from Brahman, hence the universe is actually non-existent as false as a dream. He contends that the supposed existence of the World is a misconception which has developed out of a false sense of duality. According to Bhāskar's commentary on the Brahmasutra, although Brahman is one and without a second it admits transformation in itself. This view holds that the World of matter has real existence, though it is essentially of the same nature as Brahman. According to Rāmānuja the entire creative process is the self-expression of Brahman who reveals himself in creation. Brahman is sat without a second and becomes the manifold of the sentient and non-sentient beings, the purpose being to give an opportunity to the finite beings to realise their divine destiny. The system is dualist because there is a bhoktā or the enjoyer manifested in Cit or individual souls, bhogya or the enjoyable manifested in a Cit or the material world. This appears to be very close a doctrine to Tāntric principles, where the worshipper and the Worshipped exist as well as Cit-Sakti and the created universe. But the difference lies in the fact that the universe in Tantra is not a separate reality but consciousness veiled by Māyā Sakti. This Māyā is also not the illusion contemplated by Śankara because as Kumarila objects, how Cit would be the creator of Acit or Jaḍa because Śankara's māyā is Jaḍa or Acit despite all its 'anirvachaniyatā' or inexpressibility; but Tāntric Māyā is consciousness veiled by its own operation of Ichhā, Jñāna and Kriyā Sakti to create. Therefore the Śiva-Sakti of the Tantra Mahāvidyā though appears to be two entities are in essence one i.e. Power (शक्ति) and Power-holder (शक्तिमान्) in eternal union both being aspects of the One consciousness. Rāmānuja's and Mādhva's Laxmi and Nimbarka's Rādhā despite their dualistic characteristic point to the basis which later engendered the Tantra Advaitavāda. In all these dualistic theory the result of transformation has been accepted as a reality which the Tantra has accepted as an aspect of the same Cit or Brahman which as a static aspect is pure conscious or Śiva and as kinetic aspect is the changing universe where change is occurred every moment in the form of creation, preservation and destruction which is Sakti or consciousness veiled by its own operation.

Now let us compare the Sākta-Tāntric doctrine with Advaitavāda. As has been observed by Sir J. W.[10] the six philosophies represent differing standards according to the manner and to the extent to which the one truth may be apprehended. Each standard goes a step beyond the last, sharing however, with it certain notion in common. All these systems start with the fact that here is Spirit and Mind, Matter, consciousness and unconsciousness, apparent or real. Sāmkhya, Vedānta and Sākta Āgama called the first Purusa, Brahman, Śiva and the second Prakruti, Māyā, Sakti respectively. All these agree that it is from the association together of these two principles that the universe arises and that such association is the universe. All again agree that one principle, namely the first is infinite, formless consciousness and the second is a finitising principle which makes form. Thirdly, all regard this last as a veiling principle, that is one which veils consciousness, and hold that it is eternal, all-pervading existing now as seed (Mulaprakruti, Avyvakta) and now as fruit

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[10] Sakti and Sakta, P. 210 — Sir J. W.

(Vikruti), composed of the Guṇas—Sattva, Raja and Tama (Principle of presentation of consciousness, action and veiling of consciousness respectively) unperceivable except through its effects. In all, it is the natural principle, the material cause of the material universe.

As has already been told Sāmkhya is a dualistic system whereas Vedānta and Tantra system are non-dualistic. The classical Sāmkhya also posits a plurality of Ātman representing the formless consciousness, Prakruti being one formative activity. Advaita Vedānta says that Ātman and Prakruti are not two independent Realities but one and the same Reality, 'सर्वं खलु इदं व्रह्म'। But how this is effected? Here lies the difference between Māyāvāda of Śankara and the Adviata of Śaiva-Sākta Tantra. Both systems agree that Brahman has two aspects, one is transcendent and the other creative and immanent. According to Śankara Brahman is in one aspect Isvara associated with and in another aspect dissociated from Māyā having the characteristic of Sāmkhyān Prakriti. But Māyā is not a real independent principle like the Sāmkhyān Prakriti. According to Śankara it is an unthinkable, illogical, unexplainable (अनिर्वचनीय) mystery. It is an eternal falsity (मिथ्याभूता सनातनी) and in its eternal aspect it is associated with Brahman. But it is not real like Brahman as there is only one reality. It cannot also be said as unreal for it is the cause of and is empirical experience. So, it is neither Sat nor Asat nor partly real and partly unreal (सदसत्) and which though not forming part of Brahman, is yet, though not a second reality, inseparably associated and sheltering with (माया व्रह्माश्रिता) Brahman in its Isvara aspect. Like Sāmkhyān Prakruti it is in the nature of an unconscious principle. The universe appears by the reflection of consciousness (पुरुष, व्रह्मन्) on unconsciousness (प्रकृति, माया). In this way unconscious is made to appear conscious. This is known as (चिदाभास) Cidābhāsa.

Māyā is illusion and so is Śankara's definition of it. Although it is not a second reality but a mysterious something of which neither reality can be affirmed, the fact of positing it at all in this form gives to Śankara's doctrine a tinge of dualism from which the Tāntric doctrine is free. For it is to be noted that notwithstanding that Māyā is a falsity, it is not according to Śankara a mere negation or want of something (अभाव), but a positive entity (भावरूपं अज्ञानं) that is in the nature of a power which veils (आछादनम्) consciousness. as Prakruti does in the case of Purusa in Sāmkhya system. By this Śankara kept his Brahman free from Vikruti or transformation but thereby he is unable to fully justify his stand that 'All is Brahman' without a second since he has to admit another unconscious entity just connected with Brahman in a remote way. Whereas according to the Tāntric doctrine Śiva does in one aspect, that is as Sakti change. Sākta-Tāntric doctrine admits 'All this is Brahman' in its literal sense by admitting that even created universe is Śiva in its kinetic or Sakti aspect by the veiling operation of Māyā-Sakti which is not a चिदाभास but चिद्‌रुपिणी. Man or Jivātmā is therefore according to Tāntric system not spirit seemingly clothed by a non-Brahman falsity, but spirits covering itself with its own power or Māyā-Sakti. All is Sakti whether as Cit-Sakti or Māyā Sakti. Then in Tāntric doctrine the Vedānta's principle of one Brahman is fully achieved because Śiva is Sakti, Sakti and Saktiman being one and again Jiva and Isvara are one both being either Cit-Sakti or veiled by Māyā-Sakti. Thus whilst Śankara says mind and matter are in themselves unconscious but appear to be conscious through Cidābhāsa, the Sākta Tantra reverses the position, and says that they are in themselves conscious, for they are at base Cit ; but they yet appear to be unconscious, or more strictly limited consciousness by the veiling power of consciousness itself as Māyāsakti. So the Tāntric doctrine needs no assistance from Cidābhāsa to explain as to how Jaḍa Prakriti acts. Nothing is Jaḍa or inert in Sākta principle. All is energy, all is consciousness, somewhere it is latent and somewhere patent in different degrees. Thus सर्वं खलु इदं व्रह्म has been literally established by Sākta principle which the present-day research on physics has established by fully satisfying a rational mind by way of scientific logic leaving aside illogical thinking of religious faith or dogma. Yogaraja commentary on Abhinavagupta's Paramārthasāra that Sakti's function is to negate itself (निषेध-व्यापार-रुपा शक्तिः) amply justifies such stand.

The māyāvādins may however ask whether this avidyāsakti is conscious or unconscious. If it is conscious, how then it conceals itself and appears as unconscious, for nothing can be what it is not and the nature of consciousness is to reveal and not to conceal. Besides consciousness by such concealment is incapable of knowing itself and therefore ceases to be consciousness. The Sākta replies that this also is empirical argument based upon an imperfect idea of the nature of things. According to a Tāntrik, everyone knows that there is a consciousness in him but at the same time he recognises that it is imperfect. The māyāvādin seeks to explain this by saying that it is a false consciousness, chidāvāsa which is again explained by means of two opposites, namely, unconsciousness which is an unreality to which chidāvāsa adheres, and true consciousness or Ātmā which by virtue of its inscrutable power acts as an efficient cause in its production. This argument now ignores the world. Therefore the Sākta replies that there is no false consciousness nor unconsciousness anywhere, though there appears to be some unconsciousness. Really at base, all is consciousness which appears to be unconsciousness in varying degrees. All consciousness however imperfect is real, its imperfection being due to its suppressing its own light to itself And all apparent unconsciousness is due to this imperfection in the consciousness which sees it. Thus Māyāvāda's way of explaining the world brings in a second principle namely unconsciousness and even of a third, chidāvāsa which is not required to be adopted in the Sakti-Tāntric Advaitavāda.

Therefore the Tantra Sāstra deals with the true bondage in a true world and aims at true liberation from it. It is Sakti who both binds and liberates. Nothing is unreal or false. Sakti is and Sakti creates and thus appears as the universe. In positing evolution the Tantra Sāstra follows Sāmkhya. Saktivāda assumes a real development pariṇāma on the condition that the cause becomes effect and yet remains what it was as cause. The Tantra Sāstra deals with true bondage in the true world and aims at true liberation from it Ātmā binds itself by the Avidyāmurti of its Sakti and liberates itself by its Vidyāmurti. Thus Sakti operates in a dual capacity namely as Avidyā and Vidyā. Creation is thus an epiphany of the Ātmā which appears and is withdrawn from and into itself like the limbs of the tortoise. The all-pervading Ātmā manifest itself in Jivas as the world which supplies the objects of their enjoyment, as the mind and senses for the attainment of the objects, as ignorance which binds as knowledge which liberates when Ātmā ceases to present itself as Avidyā and as Sādhanā which provides the means of liberation. Here from the Tāntric monism takes the aid of Yoga Sāstra, a practical scripture providing the means of liberation in this very life.

(*d*) *Theory of Creation as Explained in the Tantras* :

In positing on evolution Tantra follows Sāmkhya because both consider ultimate source of the world to be real, real as unconscious Prakruti in Sāmkhya and real as conscious Sakti in Sākta Tantra. It also agrees with Nyāya-Vaishesika in holding that the powers of consciousness which are will (Icchā), knowledge (Jñāna) and action (Karma) constitute the motive power in creation. According to Sāmkhya and Vedānta Brahman or Purusa or Sat, Cit and Ananda is Eternal-Conscious-Being. It is changeless and has no activity (कर्तृत्व). It is not therefore in itself a cause whether instrumental or material but its presence gives the appearance of consciousness to the activities of Prakruti. In this sense it may be called an efficient cause. So according to Sāmkhya Prakruti reflects Purusa and in Vedānta avidyā of the three guṇas takes the reflection of Chidānanda. On the other hand the substance or factors of Mulaprakruti or Māyā are the three guṇas, the three characteristics of the principle of Nature according to which it reveals or veils consciousness and the activity or energy which urges Sattva and Tamah to operation. This Māyā is also eternal 'That' (तत्) unconscious becoming. Though it is without Chaitanya it is essentially activity, motion and change. It is the instrumental and material cause of the world but notwithstanding all the things to which Mulaprakruti gives birth. Its substance is in no way diminished by the production of the Vikruties or Tattvas. The source of all becoming is never exhausted, though the things which are therefrom produced appear and dissappear. Although the Vendānta does not accept Purusa and Prakruti as two reality, in principle of creation both the systems agree. Only Mulaprakruti of Sāmkhya is called Māyā in Vedānta, which is not real from transcendental stand point. Therefore it affirms that the only tadbastu is Nirguṇa Brahma, all else is Māyā and its products. The empirical reality is treated false due to avidyā which is inherent in the nature of the embodied spirit of Jiva. Māyā is abastu, as avidyā is neither real nor unreal so is its cause māyā. Hence the Vaidic mahāvākya 'That Thou Art' (तत् त्वं असि). 'Tat' here is Isvara i.e. Brahman with Māyā as his Upādhi. 'Tvam' is the Jiva with Avidyā as its body. It is thus established that Jiva is only Brahman when māyā is eliminated from Isvara and avidyā from Jiva. Thus the duality of Jiva and Isvara is hereby equated by the denial of avidyā and māyā respectively. But the Sākta Tantra has a different principle altogether. The Tantra Sāstra has adopted a middle course in which the reality of the world is affirmed without compromising the truth of the unity of Brhaman. The Tāntric monism recognises the reality of Mulaprakruti in the sense of Māyā-Sakti. In a qualified way it follows the Sāmkhya but it differs from it in holding that Mulaprakruti as Māyāsakti is not a principle separate from Brahman but exists as a principle of the one Brahman substance. The world therefore is the appearance of the real. It is the Brahman as power. This would be evident from the 'Kulachudamāni Tantra' while Devi has said 'अहं प्रकृतिरुपा चेत् चिदानन्द परायणा'. The Satchakranirupaṇa describes the Jivātmā as the paryāya of the Paramātmā adding that Mahāvidyā is a knowledge of their identity ; when the Brahman manifests it is called Sakti ; as Sakti is Brahman it is also nirguṇa and saguṇa. Isvara is Cit-Sakti i.e. Cit in association with the operating Prakruti as the efficient cause of the creation and Māyā-sakti which in creative operation is the instrumental and material cause of the universe. This is the Sakti which produces avidyā just as Mahāmāyā or Isvari who is responsible for involution is the Great Liberatrix. These twin aspects of Sakti appear throughout creation. Thus in the body the Cit or Brahman aspect is conscious Ātmā and the Māyā aspect is the antahkaraṇa and its derivatives mind and body. By Dasamahāvidyā it is really meant the Cit Sakti associated with Māyā-sakti or Mahāmāyā, the Mother of all worlds. In view of this the Mahāvidyā worship is not worship of material force or gross matter. Rightly therefore Kulārṇava Tantra says that some desire Dualism, other Monism such however know not my truth which is beyond both Monism and Dualism (द्वैताद्वैत विवर्जितं)[11].

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11. K. T., Chap-1, 110

According to Sāradā Tilaka creation takes place as the play of Almighty mother, due to the adrusta or Karma of Jivas, Karma forms Samskāra which in other words is known as adrusta. Jiva has to enjoy or suffer according to fruits of his Karma whereby he accumulates fresh Karma and is thus involved in an incessant volley of creation of future worlds. When the unripened actions absorbed in Māyā become in course of time ripe Sakti in the form of desire for creation arises in Parama-Śiva for the bestowal of the fruit of this Karma. At this time Parama-Śiva saw, desired and thought to be many and Sadrusa pariṇāma, takes place as Supreme Bindu. This in its tripple aspect is known as Kāmakalā, a manifestation of Sakti whence the universe emanates. This Kāmakalā is the root of all mantras. As creation will serve no purpose in the case of Karma which i not ripe, there is, after the exhaustion by fruition of the ripened karma, a dissolution ; then the universe is again merged in Māyā which thus abides until the ripening of the remaining actions. Karma like everything else reenters the Brahman and remains there in hidden potential as it were a seed and when the seed ripens creation again takes place. This goes on and on because nobody knows when it began and where there will be complete dissolution.

Sadrusa pariṇāma in creation has been described in the most important Tāntric treatise Sāradā Tilaka in which Sakti is described as under: 'या अनादिरूपा चैतन्याध्यासेन महाप्रत्वये सूक्ष्मा स्थिता'। By the supreme will in consciousness there is guṇaksovā and thereafter the Sakti became inclined (उच्छूना) to creation. This Ucchunā Sakti passes from a potential state to one of actuality. From this Sakti issues Nāda and from Nāda Parābindu. This Nāda is often identified with Kalā as a Srusti Tattva. Kalā is associated with Tamah guṇa and Mahākāla becomes the spouse of Mahāsakti for creation comes from the tāmasik aspect of Sakti. Nāda and Bindu are one and the same Sakti which represents two states of Sakti, Bindu suitable for creation (उपयोगावस्था) and Nāda, the first stress on Cit-Śakti. Thus Sakti in its first place as Tattva quivers under the influence of Cit having a longing to create (विचिकिषु) and becomes massive and appears as Parābindu. This is the first 'Sthulābastā' or gross condition which the Brahman associated with Māyā in the form of Karma assumes and is thus considered as the primal cause of the subtle and gross bodies. And in that potential undifferentiated mass lies the Universe and Beings about to be created. Parābindu is thus the predominant Kriyā Sakti. It is often compared to a grain of gram (chaṇaka) which under its outer sheath (Māyā) contains two seeds (Śivasakti) in close and undivided union. The Bindu is symbolised by a circle, the Sunya or empty space within in the Brahmapada. As Rāghava Bhatta says, She alone can create when the desire for appearance as all Her tattvas seizes Her. Then She assumes the state of Bindu which is Kriyā Sakti. This is also known as Parābindu or Kāraṇabindu distinguished from that aspect of itself which is known as Kāryabindu. The latter appears as state of Sakti after the differentiation of Parābindu in sadrusa pariṇāma. The Parābindu is the Isvara of the Vedānta with Māyā as His Upādhi. He is also the Saguṇa Brahman, i.e. combined Citsakti or Isvara with undifferentiated Prakruti as His avyakta sarira. He is Parama-Śiva adored by all the Devas. Then the parābindu divides or differentiates when casting off the covering of māyā She bent upon creation becomes twofold Śiva and Sakti. And therefrom arises creation ideation (सृष्टिकल्पना). By such unfolding the Bindu is known as the Sabda-Brahma. Sabda is not here physical sound but a guṇa of the Kāryākāsa or Atomic Ether. Sabda-Brahman, the spiritual ether of philosophy in association with its Kalā or Prakruti creates the principles of sound (Nādakalā) which is unmanifested (avyakta) and from which again is displayed the changing universe of names and forms (नामरुपात्मकम्). It is the Pranaba Rupa Brahma or 'Om' which is the cosmic causal principle and the manifested Sabdārtha, Avyaktānanda or unmanifested sound is the undifferentiated causal principle of manifested sound without any sign or characteristic manifestation such as letters. Sabda Brahman is the all-pervading impartite unmanifested Nāda-bindu substance, the primary creative impulse in Parāsiva which is the cause of the manifested Sabdārtha. This Bindu is called parā because it is the First and Supreme Bindu, it is also Nāda or Sakti on the point of creating the world. And this Brahma is also Chaitanya in all creatures and is existing in all breathing creatures as the Sakti Kuṇḍalini in Mulādhāra. And thus the Mulaprakruti in cosmic vibration, which creates all Jiva, rests as Kuṇḍalini Sakti in the Mulādhāra plexus of all the Jivas by arousing which in Yogic process, the Sabda-Brahma is realised. From this Parābindu issues forth Bindu, Bija and Nāda as the different phases of Sakti in creation. The order of the three i.e. Sakti, in will, action and khowledge differ in Isvara and Jiva. Isvara is all-knowing and therefore the order in him is the Icchā, Jñāna and Kriyā whereas in Jiva it is Jñāna, Icchā and Kriyā. Jñāna is attained only after the Sakti Kuṇḍalini is aroused. Kuṇḍalini is Cit Sakti into which Sattva enters a state known as the Paramākāshabastā. Into Her Sattva enters and thereafter Raja when She is called dhvani or the state of axarābastā. When She is again pierced by Tamah She is called Nāda. This is the avyaktābastā. Thus the three Bindus—Bindu, Nāda and Bija as aspects of Parābindu constitute the mysterious Kāmakalā triangle which with the harddhakalā forms as Devi Tripurā-Sundari menifests the universe. So the Tantra worships this Tripurā-Sundari as the Mahāvidyā Sodasi of Dasa Mahāvidyā pantheon. She is the trinity of the Divine energy in Sāmarasya state of union by worshipping which man is freed from Samsāra.

Cosmic vibration in the guṇas is followed by a real pariṇāma of the Vikrutis from the substance of Mulaprakruti. Thereafter appears the manifested Sabdārthas or the individual bodies subtle or gross. In this Jiva body three bhāvas of sound or Sakti called pasyanti, madhyamā or baikhari appears both in objective and subjective forms. Here Sabdārtha like the Greek word Logos means both thought and word combined (as Parvati Paramesvaran of Kālidāsa). To this manifested Sabdārtha Vedāntin called 'nāmarupa' but according to Tāntric notions a real material cause i.e. Parāsabda or Mulaprakruti manifesting as the principle of evolution.

In the same way as the universe had a beginning it will also have an end. The picture of Ādimahāvidyā Mahākāli depicts the mother power which dissloves or withdraws the world into Herself. Her standing in the cremation ground is a symbol of cosmic dissolution ; of course nothing is destroyed but things appear and disappear to appear again. For whatever exists can never altogether cease to be as either man's consciousness expands to that Lordliness which sees all as itself, or he and all lower beings are withdrawn into the womb of power in which they are conserved to reappear.

Now let us take up this Sabdabrahma and Barṇamālā philosophy and its relevance in the Sākta-Tāntric doctrine as Dasa Mahāvidyā.

(e) The Nada, Sphota, Bindu and Varna :

Theory of Sakti-Tāntric Philosophy :—As there is evolution of the world of things there is a similar evolution of the world of sounds or Sabdaprapañcha. In this context Paramesvara is called Sabdabrahma and the entire world is said to be born of Sabda (शब्द प्रभवः).

What is then Sabda ? It means literally both voice and the words uttered as also the sound of inanimate objects[12]. Sabda presupposes Artha, i.e., meaning or object for which this Sabda is used and pratyaya or mental apprehension. Now this apprehension has a threefold state—Parā (supreme), Suksma (subtle), Sthula (gross). Parāvāk is the causal stress which in terms of pratyaya is the cosmic ideation of Isvara. This is the Divine Word. But Vāk is also an effect either subtle or gross. When it is going forth as iksana, producing or manifesting it is the pasyanti vāk or Suksma madhyama vāk or Hiraṇyagarva Sabda. This is also known as Mātrukā state of Sabda as it exists in man prior to its gross manifestation as the varṇas in spoken speech known as Baikhari Vāk. Baikhari Vāk is manifested to the ear by the gross physical sound or Dhvani produced by the contact of the vocal organs on the surrounding air by an effort to speak (प्रयत्न). In the transcendental state of Parama-Śiva there is neither Sabda nor Artha nor pratyaya and that is why the Parama-Śiva is Nāmarupabihina. Therefore it has been said in the Vedas, 'Vag bai Paramam Brahman'. It is thus a Sakti or power of the Brahman which was in him at the time of creation and evolves into the form of the universe from Sabda-brahma. Therefore the Upanisads hold that Prajāpati only was then there and Vāk was second to Him. (प्रजापति वै इदं असित्, तस्य वाक् द्वितीया आमित्). He united with Her and She became pregnant ; philosophically this means Brahman or Śiva first willed to be many and His Sakti which was one with Him issued as His word. Therefore the world is called full of words (शब्दमय) and also sabda pravava (शब्द प्रभव:). Such Vāk is Parāsabda which rests with the Parama-Śiva as His Sakti. In Isvara as causal body the Sabda, Artha and pratyaya are one and identical. Artha is the first stressing mass of Prakruti Sakti in which are experienced all elements Thus Parāvāk or Parāsabda is Sabda in its subtle form as Mātrukā or Madhyamā Vāk and Baikhari Vāk. The Baikhari Vāk consists of varṇa which also constitutes mantras. So at this stage of causal stress Sabda, artha and pratyaya are one, there being no motion, no action, no mind but only Cit. It is only at the latter stage in the parāsabda. It is going to create Sabda-Brahmāṇḍa, that is Isvara state of Sabda or Sabda-Brahma is conceived. And at this stage only the Artha is ideated separately from Sabda and so it is called the pasyanti stage. From this stage onward Artha assumes manifold forms to make the universe. These forms are constituted five elements—Ākāsha, Vāyu, Teja, Āpas, Pruthvi, the causal sounds or Vijamantras of which are Hum, Yam, Ram, Vam, Lam respectively. That is why Veda is quoted as Sabda-Pramāna because prior to all creation Sabda was existing in Parā Pasyanti and Madhyamā states. And the Yogis could find them in their supreme and subtle states by hightening powers of the Yogic mind. In an ordinary sense Sabda or sound exists only where there is motion or spanda ; pure consciousness being without spanda is also without sabda. But from out of this Cit arises a creative stir and stress which evolves into the universe. This is the work of Isvara which is also called Sabda-brahma or Parāsabda.

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[12] Garland of Letters—Sir J. W.

Before creation of this Sabda the Sakti Tantra mentions that 'Śiva-sakti samyogāt jāyate srustikalpanā'. This union of Śivasakti is called nāda. As the relation between Śiva and Sakti is not a substantial thing apart from these two, nāda is nothing but really Śiva Sakti passing from the state of more potencey into that of the first ideating movement. In other words, nāda is the maithuna of Śiva and Sakti and according to Sākta Tantra when Mahākāla was in biparita maithuna with Mahākāli, that is when Śiva is niskriya and Sakti sakriya there issued bindu. So it has been contemplated that from nāda came mahābindu and this mahābindu differentiated into the tribindu which is Kāmakalā, the root of all mantras. Thus these two Saktis, nāda and bindu, are stages in the movement towards the manifestation of the self as object i.e. as the universe. At this stage of readiness or potency of Sakti or in nāda Sakti kriyā predominates. According to 'Prayogasāra' the Sakti who is turned towards the state of liberation (निरामयपदोन्मुखी) awakes as nāda and is turned to Śiva. For them She becauses Ham in Hamsa. She who was one with Parama-Śiva at the time of dissolution as the colesced 'Aham' and 'Idam' now in Her creative aspect as Saki Tattva transforms herseelf into nāda, or in other words potency and readiness to create becomes for the first time active as nāda and then more so as bindu which is a further development of Kriyāsakti. In Bhubaneswari Stuti the deity has been addressed as rava or nāda.

Nāda occupies the same place in the Mantra scheme as the Sadāksha Tattva and Bindu is Isvara Tattva. That is the transcendent aspect of sabda. Nāda should not be confused with its literal meaning, gross sound. It is the most subtle aspect of Sabda. It is also Kriyāsakti and Avyaktātmā Nādamātrā (unmanifested essence) which is later manifested as Sabda. It developes into Bindu. It should be differentiated from Sabdabrahman in as much as the latter is the source of manifested Sabda and Artha and the name of Brahman as the immediate creative source (शब्द शब्दार्थ कारणम्). Sabdabrahma is consciousness in all beings (चैतन्यं सर्वभूतानाम्) and the Kuṇḍalini Sakti in the mulādhāra plexus of all beings. Nāda which therefore assumes the aspect of Bindu is also Chaitanya and Sakti. It is thus the first emanative stage in the production of mantra. The second is Bindu or Sabda-brahman. The third is Tribindu, i.e. Bindu, Nāda and Bija in union or Kāmakalā ; the fourth is the production of Sabda as the Mātrukās which are the subtle state of the subsequently manifested Varṇa, and the last is the gross letters which composed of the manifested Sabda or mantra. Thus mantra in its essence is Nāda which itself is the Kriyāsakti aspect of Śivasakti, the latter being the supreme Nāda and supreme speech.

Nāda and Bindu existing in all the Bija mantras of Dasamahāvidyā which are written in this form (ँ) ends in Chandra Bindu. Nāda is shown as being over Bindu as an inverted crescent. Thus the great Bhuvaneswari Vija Hrim is composed of Ha, Ra, I, M, of which Ha means ākāsha, Ra means Agni, I, Ardhanārisvara and M, Nāda Bindu. The five elements are divided into two groups, formless and with form, both Ākāsha and Vāyu belong two the first group because until the appearance of Agni as rupa there was no colour and form. Agni therefore heads the second division. When Ākāsha is with Agni there is form. For 'Ra' is the first manifestation of rupa. This form is in the Ardhanārisvara i.e. the combined Śivasakti Rupa comprising the whole universe. Therefore the aforementioned Vija mantra represents the form aspect alongwith the Nāda-Bindu or Nirākāra aspect and the cause of the other three in which they are implicitly and potentially contained. Thus the meaning of the Vija mantra is that Chidākāsa is associated with Rupa. It is thus the Sabda statement of the birth of general form from which all particular forms are derived. In other words 'Hrim' is ideation of form in the cosmic mind.

Nāda is thus in the Mantra Sāstra that aspect of Sakti which evolves into Bindu and Bindu in its turn differentiated into the Tribindu called the Sabda-brahman and this Sabda-brahman is the creative source of Sabda and Artha, the manifested state of which is Mantra.

Nāda and Bindu are states of Sakti in which the germs of action increasingly sprouts in order to manifest a state of compactness of energy and readiness to create. Bindu is said to be the massive or Ghanābastā state of consciousness as mentioned in Prapañchasāra Tantra. Sakti is conceived as passing gradually from its subtle state through Saktitattva and Nāda and becomes relatively gross or massive as power of potency for active manifestation. That stage is called Bindu which is Mahābindu. Satehakrunirupana states that the Supreme light is form less but Bindu implies both the void and guṇa also. Bindu is void in so far as it is the Supreme Brahma. It implies guṇa as being this creative and Sakti aspect of Brahman which subsequently evolves into the Purusa and Prakruti Tattvas. The commentary on Satchakranirupana states that this Bindu is the Isvara which is also called Mahāvishṇu and Brahmapurusa. That Parābindu is the state of 'Mā' before manifestation being Śivasakti enveloped by Māyā, Bindu as the cause is Citghana or massive consciousness or power from which all the worlds and beings are about to be created. This is Parama Śiva and in Him are all the Devatās. According to the Yogic method this Bindu is in Satyaloka which within the human body exists in the pericarp of the thousand petalled lotus (सहस्रार) in the highest cerebral centre Thus this Parābindu is the head of every line of creation of the tattvas from Buddhi to Pruthuvi and their Lords and of the Sabda or Mantra creations whether belonging to the Vikāra srusti or pariṇāma srusti. This is clearly described in Sarādā Tilaka, Chap-1, Verses 8 and 9[13].

The aforesaid Nādatattva can be compared with the Dhvanitattva. Sound or dhvani is produced by the contact of one thing with another. It may by unlettered sound 'dhvani' or lettered sound 'varṇa'. Prior to production of dhvani there is a causal stress of which the production of sound is the effect. This causal stress is itself uncreated, self-produced and not caused by the striking of one thing against another. So this is called anāhata whose source is the heart plexus of human beings. Thus while Varṇas are produced by the mutual impact of the throat's air and the ear the dhvanis are produced by an assemblage of conditions of which the throat may not be one. But while Varṇātmaka Sabdas are expressive of meanings the Dhvanyātmakas are mostly insignificant. But the Varṇātmaka Sabda in order to convey meaning must be capable of expressing all arthas. Besides Varṇas and Dhvanis are momentary and how recognition comes to such Varṇātmaka Sabda is a matter of detailed appreciation. For instance, if the Varṇa sound 'Ka' is produced by different persons we hear sounds of different pitch; then what should be treated as actual sound of the Varṇa 'Ka.' Thus the sound must be understood in a generic sense unlike the individual variant uttering of it. In this way the uttered speech Varṇa can be thought of having some imperishable and invariable forms irrespective of its utterance or not. So according to Vedānta-parivāsa the Varṇa sound persists in the period of cosmic life beginning with creation and ending with dissolution (न तु मध्ये वर्णानां उत्पत्तिविनाशान्). At this stage they are compared to a jar in a dark room which cannot by reason of darkness be seen. Just as the jar existing in the dark may not be seen in the eyes, so the Prime Sabdas or Varṇas though always existing may not be always mainfested. In order to be mainfested they need an 'avibyañjaka' through which an eternal existing letter becomes an acoustic phenomenon now and then called dhvani. Thus the Sabda 'Om' is uninterruptedly going on and this can be heard only in certain stages of Sādhanā. The Kāli Murti of the Dasa Mahāvidyā is an eternal symbol of the world process involving Cit and the play of Sakti. And the garland of letters or Mātrukās on the breast of the mother Kāli symbolises an eternal existence of the Varṇas which Kāla or time cannot destroy. Besides these anāhata Sound forms of the uttered varṇas are more real and more actual than the variating uttered speech.

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[13] पराशक्तिमयः साक्षात् त्रिधासौ भिद्यते पुनः
विन्दुर्नादोवीजमिति तस्य भेदाः समीरिता
विन्दु शिवात्मको वीजं शक्तिर्नादत्रयोर्मिथः ।

Therefore a Dhvani is a manifestation of a Nitya Sabda subject to all conditions of place, time or circumstance and is nonpermanent and varible, whereas its Anāhata Svarupa is Nitya and Avikāri which may be equated with Sabda-Brahma or Parābindu. According to Śankarācharya by Dhvani it is to be understood that which is heard by a person listening from a distance without distinguishing separate letters and which in the case of a person standing nearby affects the letters with its own distinctions of high and low pitch and so forth. So such a Dhvani having different pitch, modulation, sweetness or otherwise though constitutes its Dhvani these qualities of pitch, sweetness and the like do not inhere in the Varṇas themselves but belong to their acoustic expression, the Dhvanis. Thus Dhvanis are gross embodiments or a Nitya Vikāri Swarupa of Nitya Avikāri Varṇa Sabdas. According to grammarians who believe in Sphoṭa dhvani is regarded as Avibyaanjaka. The word Sphoṭa is etymologically derived from the root 'sput' which means to open, to unfold to develop (स्फुट्यते व्यज्यते वर्णः इति स्फोटः—Sarvadarsan Sangraha). Thus it is equated with Brahman which is a self-unfolding principle, in the linguistic context it is used as that which is revealed by letters or that by which a sense is revealed (स्फुटति अर्थ अस्मात् इति स्फोटः). According to grammarians Sphoṭa is described as that eternal word symbol (Nitya Sabda) which is different from letters (Varṇātirikta) but manifestable by letters (Varṇāvibyangya) and indicative of meaning (arthapratyāyaka). According to Pātañjali Sphoṭa is a word-essence. Thus when we say that a word is produced what is really meant is that the word is revealed or manifested and not created. Similarly when one says, 'Sabda Nasyati'—what is meant is not the word perished; had that been the case we could not hear songs from radio and television which was once sung and disappeared into the ether. Thus this view of eternity of word (शब्दनित्यत्ववाद) may be compared with the Nāda and Bindu theory of the Tāntric philosophy. Nāda is the casual stress in the Parama-Śiva prior to creation of all Tattvas. That's why it is called Parānāda and when this stress is laid in a cosmic sense the consciousness takes the form of ghanatva or the Bindusvarupa which is known as Parābindu whence all the worlds of Varṇa and sound issue forth. And this Parābindu can be equated with the Sphoṭa of the grammarians which is eternal Sabdabrahma.

But another important distinction is that according to the grammarians the word is not constituted by sound (dhvani) but only revealed by it. For instance the word पट is not a mere combinations of meaningless sounds like प and ट but it possesses a unitary character of its own which has the capacity of revealing a meaning. It is this capacity of revelation that characterises 'Sphoṭa' and in this sense Sphoṭa is also Parābindu because in it both Sabda and Ārtha as nāma and rupa exists as two sides of a Chaṇaka seed or like Śivasakti union. Parābindu is thus the very line of creation, of the tattvas from Buddhi to pruthivi and their Lords and of the Sabda or mantra creation all belonging to the Vikāra Srusti or Pariṇāma Srusti. This Parābindu again divides itself into three, such as Bindu, Nāda and Bija. Bindu is said to be the nature of Śiva and Bija of Sakti and Nāda as the mutual relation between these two as has already been stated. This Parābindu or 'asabda' is a stage of Mahākāli from which issue all letters and words (Sabda) and the world of things (Artha) which they denote. Into Her again they are dissolved. The garland of severed heads worn by Mākākāli contains fiftyh eads, i.e., Varṇamālā consisting of fifty letters of Sanskrit alphabets. These letters represent the universe of names and forms i.e., Sabda and its meaning or Artha. She the devourer of all, slaughters or in other words withdraws both Nāma and Rupa, Sabda and Artha into her undivided consciousness at the time of Mahāpralaya. Thus Mahākāli wears the letters as creatrix and also wears them as the dissolving power who takes all these into Herself again.

In short Sabda or lettered sound is in its causal state known as Supreme Speech (Parāvāk). This is Sabda-brahman or Sphoṭa or Logos, i.e., that aspect of reality or consciousness which is the immediate cause of creation. In other words it is the dychotomy in consciousness which is 'I' and 'This' 'Sabda' and 'Artha', 'Mind' and 'Matter'. This condition of causal Sabda is the cosmic dreamless State (Susupti). This Sabda-brahman awakening from causal sleep sees, that is creatively ideates the universe and is then known as Pasyanti Sabda. As a result of this ideation forms arise in the creative mind which are themselves impressions carried over from previous worlds which ceased to exist as such when the universe entered into the state of susupti on the previous dissolution. These re-arise as the formless consciousness awakes to enjoy once again sensuous life in the world of forms. It is due to the Samskāra the Sabda always carries its Artha ab initio without waiting for its acquisition by empirical method. The grammarian Sphoṭa in the same way carry Sabda and Artha in a unified manner in dhvani.

Now the cosmic mind is at first itself both grāhaka and grāhya for it has not yet projected its thought into the plane of matter. The mind as subject-cogniser is Sabda and as the object-cogniser the subtle Artha. This Sabda called Madhyamā Sabda is a hidden speech. At this stage the Varṇas are the little-mothers or mātrukās, the subtle forms of gross speech but at this stage there is already a differentiation of consciousness into subject and object or Sabda and Artha. This state is known as Swapnābastā. The cosmic mind then projects these mental images or mātrukā unto the material plane and thus gross physical objects or sthula artha are materialised. This is the cosmic waking stage or jāgratābastā. At this stage the thought movement expresses itself through the vocal organs in contact with the air as uttered speech or Vaikhari Sabda consisting of letters, syllables and sentences. This Vaikhari Sabda is manifested Sabda or Nāma and the physical objects denoted by speech are the gross Artha or Rupa.

Tantra Sāstra accepts the words or Sabda as various forms of Sakti. From Kuṇḍalini issued Sakti, from Sakti Dhvani, from Dhvani Nāda, from Nāda Nirodhikā, from Nirodhikā Ardhendu, from Ardhendu Bindu, from Bindu Parāsabda, from Parā Pasyanti, Madhyamā and Vaikhari Sabda. Thus dhvani is a subtle causal principle and not a gross manifestation of Sabda. Madhyamā is subtle state of Sabda which comes from parā and pasyanti. Parā and other Sabdas are located in various Yogic Chakras as mentioned by Rāghava Vatta[14]. Thus Kuṇḍalini being aroused touches in the heart, throat and palate and going through the passages of the head and nose and teeth and coming out from the base of the tongue and lips becomes audible Vaikhari. The Kuṇḍalini who has thus invested herself is the mother of all variety of Sabda. Thus ultimately the Sākta Tāntric conception of words and sounds lead to the Kuṇḍalini Yoga system advocated by Tāntric system of philosophy.

THE SAKTA TANTRIC YOGA SYSTEM

The word Yoga comes from the root 'Yuj', which means to join. It means the process by which the human spirit is brought into the near divine spirit and having a conscious communion with it or merged with it according as the nature of the human spirit is held to be separate like Sājujya and Sālukya or becomes one with the Divine spirit as in Sārupya. In Sājujya and Sālukya mukti the Yoga system is held to be Dvaita because the worshipper and the worshipped retain their separate identity but in Sārupya mukti the Jiva is completely identified with the Śiva, as in Advaita system and also as in Sakti-Tāntric Yoga system. The worshipper ultimately realises that he is Śiva (शिवोऽहं शिवोऽहम्). Thus Tāntric Yoga is that process by which the identity of the two, Jivātmā and Paramātmā is realised by the practitioner of Yoga. This realization is achieved by the way that the spirit is pierced through the veil of Māyā which as mind and matter obscures the knowledge of Paramātmā from Jivātmā. From monistic standpoint Yoga is not a union for union implies a Dualism of the divine and human spirit. In this case the process is called the Yoga and not the result. On the contrary in Dualism the Divine and Human spirit are kept apart and so it is also not perfect Yoga. It is in the Sākta Tāntric realisation that Yoga or union is actually established by following the Satkarma, Āsana, Mudrā Pratyāhāra, Prāṇāyāma, Dhyāna and samādhi, which are cleansing of the body, seat, postures for yogic purposes, the abstraction of the senses from their objects, breath control, meditation and ecstasy. While the Satkarma āsana, mudrā and pratyāhāra etc are physical processes, prāṇāyām, dhyāna and Samādhi are mental and supra mental processes which lead to liberation. Samādhi or ecstasy is of two kinds, imperfect (Sabikalpa), perfect (Nirvikalpa). It is this Nirvikalpa Samādhi that endows the human spirit a complete monistic experience (अहं ब्रह्मस्मि) a knowledge in the sense of realisation which does not actually produce liberation but is liberation itself.

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[14] शैवोरः कण्ठतालुस्था शिरोघ्राणरदस्थिता
जिह्वामूलोष्ठ निःसृत सर्ववर्णपरिग्रहा
शव्द प्रपन्च जननी श्रोत्रग्राह्यातु बैश्वरी ।

Of course, for such realisation there are several methods of Yoga, known as Jñāna, Rāja, Hatha, Laya and Mantra. Mantra Yoga is of two kinds, according as it is pursued along the path of Kriyā or Bhāva. But of these the Tantra Sāstra lays emphasis on Laya Yoga or the Kuṇḍalini Yoga. Kuṇḍalini is a Sakti as has already been described and rests in the Mulādhāra Chakra of human beings. It is not a mystic thought as the basis of Yoga is essentially rational. Why and how this Sakti rests in Mulādhāra and other Chakras has been explained by Tantra Sāstra, that man is a microcosm and whatever exist in the outer universe also exists in him. All the Tattvas and the worlds are within him and so also in the Supreme Śivasakti The man's spinal cord or Merudaṇḍa exists in the trunk of the body and below it are legs. The trunk having the spinal cord in it appears to be more prone to consciousness and are known as having the seven upper regions or Lokas and the leg portion, the nether worlds. In the upper regions the fruits of Karma in the form of Samskāra are stored and these regions are known as Bhuh, Bhuvah, Svah, Tapah, Jana, Mahah and Satya Lokas corresponding with six centres or Chakras, five in the trunk, the sixth in the lower cerebral center and the seventh in the upper brain or Satya-loka, the abode of the Supreme Śiva-Sakti. The six centres are the Mulādhāra at the base of spinal column in a position midway in the perinaeam between the root of the genitals and the anus. Above it in the region of the genitals, abdomen, heart, chest or throat and in the foreheads between the eyebrows are the Swādhisthāna, Maṇipura, Anāhata, Visuddha and Ājñā Chakra or Lotuses respectively. The seventh region beyond the Chakras is the upper brain, the highest center of manifestation of consciousness in the body and therefore the adode of the Supreme Śivasakti. By stating abode it is not meant that the Supreme is localised but its manifestations. The Supreme is everywhere both within and without the body but it is said to be in the Sahasrāra or the upper brain Chakra where by way of concentration Śiva-Sakti consciousness is realised. This is because consciousness is realised by entering in and passing through the highest manifestation of mind the Sattvamaye Buddhi above and beyond which is Śiva as Cit and Chidrupini Sakti. From this Śiva-Sakti Tattva aspects are evolved like mind in its form as buddhi, ahamkāra, manah and indriyas, the centre of which is in and above the Ajñā chakra and below the Sahasrāra. From ahamkāra proceeds the tanmātrās or genesis of the sense particulars which evolved the five forms of the sensible matter—Ākāsa, Vāyu, Agni, Apas, and Pruthivi. These are not ordinary matters but are varying degrees of matter from the etherial to the solid. Although mind and matter pervade the whole body they are predominant in certain centers known as Chakras. Thus Ajña is a center of mind, Visuddha of ākāsa, Anāhata of vāyu, Manipura of agni, Swādhisṭhan of apas, and Mulādhāra of pruthvi. In short, man as a microcosm is the all-pervading spirit manifesting in the Sahasrāra vehicled by Sakti in the form of mind and matter, the centers of which are the six Chakras.[15] This, however, should not be identified with any of the internal physical organs inside the spinal cord. They are rather vital centers within the spinal column that influence and govern the gross tract outside the spine. In other words they are centers of Prāṇasakti manifested by Prāṇavāyu in the living body, the presiding devatas of which are names for the universal consciousness manifested in the Chakras. These are also not perceptible to the gross senses but are 'atindriya' experiences. According to Sir J. W. even if they were perceptible in the living body they disappear with the disintegration of organism and death. The Chakras are imagined as lotuses having varying number of petals ; the mulādhāra padma has got four petals, swādhisthāna six, manipura ten, anāhata twelve, bisuddha sixteen and ājñā Chakra two petals. They are fifty in all as are the letters of the alphabets which are the Vijas of the petals or mātrukās associated with the tattvas in the creative cosmic process manifesting either as physiological or psychological function. It is important to note that the number of petals comes to fifty letters either by leaving out Ksa (क्ष) or the second La (ळ). The Sahasrāra lotus imagines to have consisted of one thousand petals which indicate at best that the petals of these letters cannot be numbered. The question may arise as to why petals vary in number. Sir J. W. while discussing Satcakranirupana has stated that the number of petals in any Chakra is determined by the number and position of the nāḍis or Yoga nerves around that Chakra. Thus there are four nāḍis surrounding and passing through the Vital movements of the Mulādhāra Chakra. The petals are thus configurations made by the position of nāḍis at any particular center. These nāḍis are not gross physical nerves but are yoga nāḍis i.e., subtle channels along which prāṇavāyu flows. It has been contemplated in Yoga Sāstra that the entire body is filled with innumerable nāḍis with a highly complicated chart of ocean of currents. It is interesting to quote an Indian physician and Sanskritist who opined that better anatomy is given in the Tantras. Merudaṇḍa is called vertebra column. Western science divides it into five regions corresponding with the five Chakras. The central spinal system comprises the brain or encephalon contained within the skull as also the spinal cord extending from the upper border of the Atlas below the cerebellum and descending to the second lumbar vertebra where it tapers to a point called the 'filum terminale'. Microscopic investigations of Dr. Cunningham have, however, disclosed the existence of highly sensitive grey matter in the 'filum terminale' which represents the position of the Mulādhāra and was hitherto thought to be mere fibrous cord.[16] As regards the physiological relations with Chakras it may said that the four Chakras above the Mulādhāra however related to genito-excretory digestive, cardiac and respiratory functions and the two upper lotuses the Ājñā and the Sahasrāra denote various forms of its cerebral activity ending in the response of pure consciousness therein gained through Yoga.

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[15] Sakti and Sakta, P. 434, Sir John Woodroffe.

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[16] The Serpent Power, P. 105, Sir J. W.

The Idā and Pingalā nāḍi are the left and right sympathetic cords crossing central column Susumnā from one side to the other making a three-fold knot called Triveni of the Ājñā Chakra. This is the spot known as medulla in physiological science where the sympathetic cords join together and whence they take their origin.

Now the next question comes as to how the Kuṇḍalini Yoga system operates in these plexuses. In Dhyāna Yoga rousing of Kuṇḍalini may not be felt necessary as Samādhi is attained by intellective process of meditation by way of mantra Sādhanā and by practising detachment from the world. But this Yoga knows not the enjoyment of union with Śiva in and through his body power which is available only to a Kuṇḍalini Sādhaka because without arousing Kuṇḍalini Sakti the bliss of union of Śiva and Sakti and its accompanying power cannot be gained even though there may be liberation. Thus the fundamental difference between Kuṇḍalini Yoga and Dhyāna Yoga or Jñāna Yoga is when the latter is a path of asceticism the former is one of enjoyment. In other words, when the ecstasy is obtained on the path of Kuṇḍalini Yoga the Sādhaka is endowed with both bhukti and mukti whereas in other systems of Yoga only a bhāvanā Samādhi is attained like Buddhist's Nirvaṇa or void which is comparatively a negative-process in which the positive act of raising consciousness in which the central part of the body takes no part. Therefore this Kuṇḍalini Yoga or Laya Yoga, as some called it, advocated by Sākta Tantra and Mahāvidya worship is a full-fledged system of Yoga bringing the Supreme blissful experience both here (इह) and amurta (there). Thus both happiness here and bliss of liberation here and hereafter may be attained by this system of Yoga. Because in this Yoga the individual life and the world life are realised as one and so the Tāntric Sādhaka when fulfilling the natural function of the body believes amidst all acts that he is himself the Lord, the Bhairava, 'शिवोऽहं, भैरबोऽहम्'. It is his conviction that Śiva does all these acts and enjoyments in and through him and his life and activities are conceived as part of the divine action in nature that is Sakti manifesting and operating in the form of man. There is no negligence of the body or the world in favour of a Supreme power because he feels the body is Sakti and its needs are Sakti's needs. Thus by this process of Yoga while the Sādhaka realises himself as one with the Divine Sakti in all his actions comprising matter and spirit. He gradually becomes conscious of the oneness of his body, the world body, and the Divine body. And that's why Kulārṇava Tantra says that by what men fall, by that they rise and for that bhoga cannot be an impediment to Yoga. Rather according to a Kaula Sādhaka of the Mahāvidyā pantheon yoga is bhoga and bhoga is yoga and the world itself becomes the seat of Liberation (योगो भोगायते मोक्षायते संसारः). A vira Sādhaka knowing himself as the embodiment of Śiva unites with woman as the embodiment of the Sakti on the physical plane. The Divya Sādhaka unites within himself his own principle, female and male which are the 'Hearts of the Yogini'. Thus this mystic coition of the Tāntric worshipper is nothing but symbolises various forms of Sāmarasya or union of the Kuṇḍalini Sakti in Mulādhāra with the Śiva principle in Sahasrāra and that brings liberation with all its attendant bliss.

Philosophically Yoga is a process of polarisation to achieve the desired end by the body instrument. The body power polarises into two forms, namely the static or the Kuṇḍalini Sakti in Mulādhāra Chakra and the dynamic forces of the body as Prāṇa. Thus behind all activity there is a static background. This static centre of power is a gross form of Cit or consciousness and, by appearance this power is the highest form of force in manifestation. Thus for every aspect in the world and the world beyond there are twin aspects of potential and kinetic energy. The Sākta Tantra has therefore rendered the world process as a polarisation in consciousness itself. By Kuṇḍalini Yoga this polarity existing in the body is destroyed by disturbing the equilibrium of the bodily consciousness which attributes to maintenance of two poles. As a result the potential pole of energy in the human body is stirred to action in which the dynamic sakti supported by it is drawn thereto and the whole dynamism thus engendered moves upward to unite with the quiescent consciousness in the Sahasrāra. As a result of this polarisation the individual mind gets involved in the pure unbounded ether of consciousness, the Chidākāsa. And the Sādhaka will see everything Brahmamaya which is a logical consequence of this polarisation.

This also happens in case of matter. According to modern science atom is a miniature universe resembling our solar system, at the center of this atomic system there is a charge of positive electricity round which a cloud of negative charges called electron revolve. The positive and negative charges hold each other in such a way that the atom is in a condition of equilibrated energy and does not ordinarily break up. Thus here also a positive charge is at rest at the center and negative charges in motion round about the center. This truth about atom also applies to the whole universe. In the world system the planets revolve round the Sun and this happens everywhere until we arrive at the Brahma-Bindu which is the point of absolute rest, round which all forms revolve and are thus maintained. Even in the tissues of the living body the operative energy is polarised into two forms, anabolic and katabolic, the one tending to change and the other to conserve the tissue, the actual condition of the tissues being simply the resultant of these two coexistent or concurrent activities. Even in the case of impregnated ovum, Sakti is already presented in its two polar aspects, the ovum in static stage and the spermatoza, the dynamic. The germ cells also follows suit in the process of reproduction. Obviously Sakti when manifesting divides itself into two polar aspects, static and dynamic much like the poles of a magnet. In any given sphere of activity of force, according to this cosmic principle is a static background that is Sakti at rest or coiled as the Tantras say. The Mahāvidyā Mahākäli illustrates this cosmic truth ; the Divine Mother moves as the kinetic sakti on the breast of Sadāsiva who is the static background of pure consciousness which is actionless (निष्क्रिय), the guṇamayee Mother being all activity. This truth about microcosm is also true of the macrocosm. From the Mahākuṇḍali the universe has sprung. In her Supreme forms She is at rest, coiled round and one with the Śiva Bindu. When she uncoils Herself She manifests the universe. The three coils of this Mahākuṇḍali are the three guṇas, the Sattva, Raja and Tama and the three and half coils allude in the Kuvjika Tantra as Prakruti and its three guṇas together with the Vikrutis. Her fifty coils are the letters of alphabet, as She goes on uncoiling the Tattvas and the Mātrukās issue from Her. First She creates mind and then matter and this goes on till the last or the Pruthivi tattva is created ; then She rests and again coiled. So in case of Brahmāṇḍa we have thus Mahākuṇḍali at rest as Chidrūpini Sakti in the Sahasrāra, the point of absolute rest and then in the body in which the relative static center is Kuṇḍalini at rest and round this center the whole of the bodily forces move. The difference between the Sakti in operation and the Sakti at rest is therefore apparent and not fundamental both being of the same nature. So by Yoga system when this Sakti at the Mulādhāra is aroused and taken to Chidrūpiṇi Sakti in the Sahasrāra the polarisation of the body gives way and the Sādhaka loses his body consciousness and is merged with the Supreme consciousness and sees Brahma everywhere. Therefore when Kuṇḍalini Sakti sleeps in Mulādhāra man is awake to the world, but when She awakes to unite and does actually unite with the Supreme static consciousness which is Śiva, then consciousness is asleep to the world and is one with the spirit of all things, and that is the scientific basis of Tantra-Mahāvidyā Philosophy. This basis of Tantra Mahāvidyā worship has got an applause from physicists of the late twentieth century.[17] In the words of Fritjof Capra, the author of the Tao of Physics, 'The Universe is no longer seen as a machine, made up of a multitude of separate objects, but appears as a harmonious indivisible whole; a network of dynamic relationships that include the human observer and his or her consciousness in an essential way. The fact that modern Physics, the manifestation of an extreme specialisation of the rational mind, is now making contact with mysticism, the essence of religion and the manifestation of an extreme specialisation of the intuitive mind, show very beautifully the unity and complementary nature of the rational and intuitive modes of consciousness of the Yang and the Yin (like the Śiva and Sakti principles of the Tantra).

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Modern Physics can show the other sciences that scientific thinking does not necessarily have to be reductionist and mechanistic, but holistic and ecological views are also scientifically sound.' Will the modern world look ahead into the revival of those golden days of Tantra to offer in the hands of the worried modern man the systems view of life to reach a progression from multiplicity and chaos to oneness and order. And once the Whole is cognised, knowledge of parts will appear in its true perspective not as disintigrating and separate entities, but as aspects of a homogeneous Whole.

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17. The Turning Point, Fritjof Capra, P. 32

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